

One Man's Trash

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Series:	Part 49 of I'm Writing Fanfiction About Block Men God Help Me , Part 1 of Thicker Than Water
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[Amazing](#), [Showstopping](#), [Spectacular](#), [dsmp fics I adore](#), [top tier SBI/crimeboys fics that distract my from my homework](#), [Sbi found family](#), [Bedtime stories](#), [hixpatch's all time favorites](#), [Meyt fics](#), [notfranks fics](#), [fanfics that hurt me but i love them \(authors should pay for my therapy\)](#), [☆*: .o. o\(≥▽≤\)o .o.:*☆](#), [SBI classics](#), [i am queer i am here these block men help my existential fear](#), [my fav fics ever - mostly sbi that are tommy centric](#), [a collection of every dsmp fic i've read](#), [c20w 's stash of treasures](#), [evesdsmpfics](#), [Fics I would read again](#), [Vigilante!Innit My Beloved](#), [LynnX's Blockperson Hoard](#), [DSMP](#), [What I read instead of sleeping](#)

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One Man's Trash

by [SilverWing15](#)

Summary

(is another man's brother)

The kid is glaring down at him and eating a partially moldy apple like he's daring Wilbur to come fight him for it. "What the fuck?" Wilbur says.

The kid takes a huge chunk out of the apple and definitely doesn't chew it enough before he swallows. "You got a fucking problem, asshole?"

"I mean...kind of?" Wilbur says. "There's a child eating literal garbage in front of me so I feel like that's a bit concerning."

"Shouldn't you be robbing a bank or getting your ass kicked by superheroes?"

"Shouldn't you be in school?"

The kid snarls wordlessly and chucks an empty carton from some chinese place at him. "Fuck off man. Forget this dump."

"What, you know a better one to eat from?"

"I know one that doesn't have a fucking weirdo supervillain in it!" The kid slams the lid of the dumpster down.

Rude.

Or: It was only a matter of time before I did a superhero AU

Notes

Superhero AU! or more accurately: Supervillain AU. I'm trying out a bunch of stuff with this one and I'm excited for you guys to see it! Also credit where credit is due, I was super inspired by a couple other villain SBI works.

One More Step Out of the Pit by AdrianaintheSnow (read it, its so good)

and Hush now (you were lost but now you're found) by CorpseArt (also super amazing, read it)

I love Villain Wilbur Tommy so I started out writing a oneshot. and here we are. This one is gonna be a pretty big AU. Can't really complain tho, I love it, and I hope you do too! Enjoy! Series title may or may not change on this one, depends on if I can think of anything better.

Chapter 1

The kid is glaring down at him and eating a partially moldy apple like he's daring Wilbur to come fight him for it. "What the fuck?" Wilbur says.

The kid takes a huge chunk out of the apple and *definitely* doesn't chew it enough before he swallows. "You got a fucking problem, asshole?"

"I mean...kind of?" Wilbur says. "There's a child eating *literal garbage* in front of me so I feel like that's a bit concerning." He's also ended up in a dumpster like some two-bit villain not one third of the most dangerous team in the city. But the kid eating garbage is honestly more concerning.

The kid takes another hunk out of the apple. Wilbur grimaces. He definitely got mold on that bite. That can't be healthy. "Aren't you like. A supervillain?" the kid asks. He's chewing with his mouth open.

"I have standards."

"Go have them somewhere else," the kid sneers. He bites the core of the apple in half and chews like *twice* before he swallows it.

"You are a terrible child," Wilbur informs him.

"Fuck off I'm not a child!"

"How old are you?"

"Shouldn't you be robbing a bank or getting your ass kicked by superheroes?"

"Shouldn't you be in school?"

The kid snarls wordlessly and chucks an empty carton from some chinese place at him. "Fuck off man. Forget this dump."

"What, you know a better one to eat from?"

"I know one that doesn't have a fucking weirdo supervillain in it!" The kid slams the lid of the dumpster down.

Rude.

Wilbur opens it silently and hoists himself out landing without a sound behind the kid. He's skinny, obviously. People don't eat out of dumpsters for the fun of it. His t-shirt is thin, ragged at the hems and torn in several places. He doesn't seem to have a jacket even though winter is just around the corner.

His shoes and pants are just as bad. He's got a ragged backpack over one shoulder, there's a dented metal water bottle trying to escape from a hole at the bottom. His hair is greasy and matted. He certainly smells like he hasn't had a bath in far too long.

Not that Wilbur himself smells great at the moment. Since he just climbed out of a dumpster.

"Why don't I get you something better than dumpster food?"

The kid yelps and whips around, skittering back until his bag hits the alley wall. "What the *fuck?!'*" He snaps, defensive and afraid. Apparently snarking with a supervillain is one thing while that villain is lying in a dumpster and quite another while that supervillain is standing behind you.

Wilbur stands still, hands in his pockets, body relaxed.

The kid's eyes dart over him warily, but Wilbur's never been much of one for looking intimidating. That would undermine his ability. Besides, he's got enough of a reputation to keep people scared.

Most people at least.

"I'm just saying, you could eat food that *isn't* likely to make you sick. I'll buy."

"Do I look like a fucking idiot?"

"No, but you look hungry."

That shuts the kid up. For a few seconds. "Right, whatever dude, not like they'll let *you* into anywhere and they *definitely* won't let me in."

Wilbur snorts, it's a little sad that a supervillain is more likely to be let into a place than a fucking homeless kid. That's the world they live in though.

"They'll let me in," he assures the kid.

"What's the catch?" the kid asks.

Wilbur opens his mouth to say that there isn't one, but he stops at the last second. The kid is eyeing him, wary, watchful. Wilbur wasn't on the streets for long before Phil found him but he still remembers it. There was *always* a catch, always some hidden motive, or worse, a trap.

"Information," Wilbur says, "you hear all kinds of stuff on the street. Give me a sneak peek."

Techno has his shadows that will have better information than this kid could ever even dream of getting his hands on. But this isn't about information, it's about getting the kid a meal to ease the guilt in Wilbur's chest.

"Fine," the kid says, "you get me food and I'll tell you shit. But I don't say shit until you've actually got the food."

“You think I can’t do it?” Wilbur laughs. “Do you know who I am?”

“Some raggedy ass supervillain,” the kid snorts, “I don’t keep track of you fuckers.”

Wilbur gapes at him, shocked, and a little offended, to be honest. He’s fucking *Siren*, he works with The Blade and The Angel of Death. What fucking hole does this kid live in?

But if the kid doesn’t already realize, does he really want to tell him? He’s clearly skittish, he keeps the bravado up but Wilbur can see how he’s braced to run.

“You’re a brat,” Wilbur informs him. “Come on, I know a place that’ll respect me more than you.”

The kid trails behind him, shoulders hunched, grip tight on his backpack. Like Wilbur’s going to try and rob a fucking homeless kid.

Since the brat thinks he’s some bottom of the barrel, c-list villain he might think he’d stoop that low. Little shit.

...Though to be fair he did find Wilbur in a dumpster.

But Wilbur was there *intentionally*. It’s *different*.

He leads the kid through the alleyways to Niki’s bakery. He glances back and catches the kid inhaling deeply, shutting his eyes to savor the smell. He smirks.

The kid opens his eyes and his soft smile disappears into a scowl. “You gonna fucking rob a bakery, dipshit? That’s low.”

“No robbery necessary,” Wilbur laughs, knocking on the back door.

The kid frowns and opens his mouth, but Niki appears before he can say anything. She’s not really active on the superpowers scene anymore, but she’s still quick on her feet. Her eyes flick from Wilbur to the kid and she’s probably got the whole situation figured out in the time it would take for most people to even register that there’s a kid there at all.

“Hello Niki,” Wilbur says, subtly, he makes the sign for ‘undercover.’ It’ll be enough to keep her from using his villain name.

“Hi,” Niki says, easily following his lead, “good to see you again. Who’s your friend?”

“This is...” Wilbur raises an eyebrow at the kid.

He raises one back, or he tries. He’s not quite got the ‘raising one’ thing down.

“Don’t be rude,” Wilbur scolds to keep from smiling too softly at him. “She’s not the fucking fae, she can’t use your name against you.”

The kid snorts, but he does answer. “Tommy.”

Niki beams at him, “nice to meet you Tommy! What can I get you boys?”

“Couple sandwiches?” Wilbur asks hopefully, he flicks a glance to the kid. Tommy. “And something sweet for the kid.”

“Fuck you,” Tommy mutters.

Wilbur laughs.

“Coming right up,” Niki says, still cheerful, but the look she flashes Wilbur tells him that he will be explaining later. There are worse fates.

He and Tommy linger behind the bakery and eat the food Niki brings them. Tommy scarfs it down like he’s convinced somebody is about to come around the corner and realize that he’s eating food too good for him and take it away. Then he tries to steal the other half of *Wilbur’s* sandwich, the little shit.

Wilbur slaps his hand away, “aren’t civilians supposed to be scared of supervillains?”

“You’re not a supervillain, you’re a bitch.”

“You’re such a child.”

“Am fucking not!”

Niki brings the kid a pastry, something with fruit jam in the middle of it. Tommy *almost* savors it, but it’s still inhaled so quickly that Wilbur is afraid he’ll choke. When the food is gone, Tommy takes a deep breath. “So, information, right? You got something specific you’re looking for?”

“I’ll know it when I hear it,” Wilbur says, “just tell me what you know.”

Like he figured, it’s basic stuff. Things that get passed through the network of the homeless to warn others from staying someplace dangerous. Nothing he *needs* to know, nothing he couldn’t get from some other source if he had needed to know.

But the point isn’t getting information.

The point was getting Tommy a meal.

The kid doesn’t linger long, and Wilbur doesn’t try to keep him. He lets him disappear into the maze of alleys and hopes that he’ll find somewhere warm to sleep tonight.

'Park' is probably a generous word for whatever the fuck this place is. It’s got grass and a couple of trees and a pond all stuffed into an area that could fit a normal building, all of it fenced in by sad looking hedges.

Its still one of Tommy's favorite places to go. Its a nice break from all the concrete and steel. In the summer he climbs up one of the trees and sleeps in the branches, but its turning autumn now and its too cold for that and there's not enough leaves to hide him besides.

Tommy doesn't expect to see the villain ever again. He tries to keep away from all that shit, its a big city, there's plenty of dumpsters to go around.

So he's really surprised when he spots the dude in the park. Sitting on a bench, feeding the fucking *ducks* of all things.

He's also clearly in civilian dress. As in, Tommy is now witnessing the secret identity of a fucking supervillain and he needs to get the *fuck* out of here before said supervillain realizes it.

The crowds are thin, the weather is shitty and only insane people and people with nowhere else to go are out here. There's not a big enough group to hide in.

If he tries to bolt the villain will spot him for sure. If he sits here, the villain will notice him. Fuck. Why the fuck does all this shit have to happen to *him*? He just wants something to fucking *eat*.

A deeper, more paranoid part of him wonders, *How did he find you again? Is he looking for you?*

Does he know?

As if summoned by the sheer force of his dread, the villain looks up and his eyes lock on Tommy. His hand freezes mid-motion, whatever he's feeding the ducks falls to the ground.

Tommy swallows. He dares to take a hesitant step backwards. He has no idea what this guy's powers are. He doesn't know if he's got speed or ranged attacks or any of that shit. Fuck.

Does he stand a chance running?

The villain frowns, and then motions for Tommy to come to him.

Oh fuck no. That's not fucking happening. No fucking way. Tommy's not an idiot.

The villain's frown deepens.

Fuck.

Tommy shuffles a step closer to him. He motions more insistently for Tommy to come to him. Shit. Fuck.

He could still run. He could try at least. Instead of waltzing up to his doom.

The villain is taller than him, and better fed. Even if he doesn't have any physical enhancement with his powers, even if he doesn't have ranged attacks, he could probably take Tommy down easy. Maybe if Tommy talks to the guy he can convince him to keep him alive.

Yeah, yeah. He needed information last time, Tommy can tell him the juicy gossip and swear that he won't tell a fucking *soul* what he looks like under the mask and it'll be fine. It'll be all good. He'd seemed a reasonable sort of crazy. It could work.

Please fucking let it work.

The ducks paddle away as he approaches, quacking warningly. Tommy isn't interested in them though. The villain is still frowning at him. He looks...almost concerned.

"Hey Tommy," he says, casual, simple. Like they're normal friends meeting in a park to do normal things together. Like he's not a fucking supervillain who's secret identity Tommy now knows. He pats the space on the bench beside him.

Fuck.

Slowly, Tommy sits, his hand braced on the arm of the bench, ready to launch off of it and make as much of a run for it as he can. "Listen man," he says, his voice shakes a tiny bit, "I didn't know you were gonna be here. I swear. I won't tell anyone, just let me--"

"Tell them what?" the villain asks, frowning. "Oh, the," he motions to his face. "Don't worry about it."

"Don't *worry about it?!'*" Tommy's voice goes high and incredulous. "Its your fucking--" he drops his voice to a low whisper, "your fucking secret identity dude, isn't that like. A whole fucking thing with you mask types?"

The villain waves a lazy hand through the air, "I'm not worried about you knowing," he says. "You're a smart kid."

Oh god.

Fuck that's a terrifying thing to hear. It always seemed kind of campy and shit when some dumb villain in a TV show said it but fuck does it send a chill down his spine. "Cool," he squeaks.

The villain smiles, not sharp edged and dark like Tommy expects. Its a relaxed smile, he's at ease, his long legs crossed at the ankle in front of him, one arm draped over the back of the bench the other dipping down to his side to--to grab a fucking grape?

"What the fuck?"

"For the ducks," the villain says. "You want one?"

"I thought you fed ducks like. Bread."

"Nah, that's bad for them, you're supposed to give them stuff closer to what they could forage on their own."

"They could forage grapes?"

“I dunno man its just what my dad said.”

Why the *fuck* would he share personal details like that ? No wonder he’s some shit tier villain if he’s pulling stunts like this and getting his ass dumped in the garbage.

The villain pulls a handful of grapes out of the bag with a rustle and hands them over to Tommy. “Either you eat ‘em or the ducks do, I don’t care.” He tosses a few more grapes into the water, the ducks have started coming warily back, one of them stretches its neck out to snag a floating grape. When that one doesn’t get eaten, the others crowd closer.

Tommy eats the grapes, the fucking ducks get handouts all the time, he hasn’t eaten all day. The villain hands him more, then tosses more to the ducks.

“Why are you here?” Tommy asks, “like..don’t you have plans for world domination and shit to be working on?”

Not that he imagines that this asshole plans anything. Not with how fucking *bad* he is at villainy.

“I needed a break,” the villain says, “got in an argument with my partners about how we should do shit.” He rolls his eyes and tosses a few more grapes to the ducks, then hands some to Tommy.

“Oh.”

“What about you?” The villain is looking at him out of the corner of his eye. Taking in Tommy’s clothes and general air of homeless brat-ness. Fucker. Tommy scowls at him. “Well I got tired of sitting up in my mansion and I decided that I’d take a fucking stroll around the park.”

The villain laughs, “fair enough. Gets pretty boring in those mansions.”

“Definitely. Nothing to do but order servant around and watch movies on my fifty three foot tall TV.”

“Truly a hard life.”

“People just don’t understand how difficult it is for the one percent,” Tommy says mournfully.

A hand pats his shoulder, gently, just one, two, then its gone. Its still enough to make him jump, his shoulders hunching as he twists away. The villain watches him for a moment with raised eyebrows. Tommy gets his breathing under control and sets his jaw, rolling his shoulders. He turns back to the ducks. “Don’t fucking touch me.”

“Noted.”

He probably shouldn’t have growled at a fucking supervillain but Tommy’s mouth has always gone faster than his mind. A chilly breeze blows over the park and he curls in on himself with a shiver.

The villain throws some more grapes to the ducks and holds out his hand to offer more to Tommy. He takes them. Of course he fucking does. He's not going to turn down food.

He stuffs them all in his mouth at once. His mind wants to ditch this weird as fuck, *dangerous* as fuck situation, but his stomach is currently willing to risk his life for some duck-grapes and it is much louder.

"Will," the villain says.

"What?"

"You can call me Will."

What the fuck? "What the fuck. Why would I call you anything?"

"Because I'm hiring you on a more permanent basis," Will says.

What kind of fucking fake name is Will? Could have picked fucking *anything* and he goes with "Will." Weirdo.

"What does that mean?"

"You gave me some good information, I want you to get more. We'll meet here say...every couple of days. You get a meal, I get what you know."

"What if I don't know anything new? That's not a long time to gather information, dickhead."

"Then you don't know anything, you still get food." Will shrugs, "as long as when you *do* know something you bring it to me you get food every time."

"That's a shit way to run a business," Tommy informs him because his mouth runs faster than his brain.

Will shrugs, "maybe I'm trying to inspire loyalty."

Tommy bites back the urge to inform the guy that no matter how many grapes he gives him he's still selling his ass out the minute it threatens his wellbeing. "Your money dude."

Will smiles, "exactly. You just get me the knowledge and I'll handle the rest."

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

He can't think, his mind is a constant chant of he knows he knows he knows he knows. He knows and you can't run. Not this time. Will stops, holding his hands up in surrender. "Easy," he says, "I just wanted to help." "Back off," Tommy snarls. He knows what fucking happens to healers on the streets. It's a useful power and everyone who's got it knows to be wary. He's not living that life. Not again. Not ever again.

Chapter Notes

this is a really lame really contrived way for Tommy to reveal his powers but I couldn't think of a better one so this is what you get.

For a month they've met at the park every other day and Tommy tells Wilbur the local gossip. He can't imagine *what* fucking plan the guy's got going on that needs this kind of information but he also doesn't give a fuck as long as it keeps him fed.

The nights get colder, but he finds a jacket abandoned at the park that serves him well enough and he's got a hidey hole that keeps the heat in alright once he covers the entrance.

All in all, this is shaping up to be the best winter he's had on the streets. He's got a secure source of food--as long as Will doesn't get his dumb ass arrested--he's got a warmer place to sleep, he's even got a bit of money stored up for emergencies.

So when he gets to the park and sees one of the ducks dragging a wing he bites his lip. There's nobody else here yet, not even Will. He's not hurting for food, he's not too far from his shelter, he could spare the energy.

The injured duck is sheltering in some bushes near the edge of the water and it's not really hard to creep up on her and pin her carefully to the ground. She squawks and thrashes but he shushes her and spreads the injured wing. It's not broken, just cut. Easy enough to fix.

He holds his hand over the wound and lets the power flow through him. The duck stills, falling into a trance, and Tommy feels his own heart slow, his own mind go hazy and peaceful. She comes back before him, struggling in his arms until she can break free of his loose grip. Then the duck takes off with a sharp, scolding quack and lands in the middle of the pond.

Tommy sits by the bush for a little longer, just until the lightheadedness goes away.

“You’re a healer?”

“Fucking hell!” He jumps, but his legs get all tangled together and he ends up falling into the shallow water. Its ice fucking cold, which at least wakes him up from the last bits of the trance. He scrambles to his feet and stands there, dripping water as Will stares at him.

Shit.

“Sorry!” Will says, “didn’t mean to scare you. Shit you’re all wet now. Here, c’mere we need to get you out of that jacket.”

“Hey, fuck off man!” Tommy snaps, retreating a few steps reflexively, which just puts him deeper in the fucking water. Like a moron.

He can’t think, his mind is a constant chant of *he knows he knows he knows he knows. He knows and you can’t run. Not this time.*

Will stops, holding his hands up in surrender. “Easy,” he says, “I just wanted to help.”

“Back off,” Tommy snarls. He knows what fucking happens to healers on the streets. Its a useful power and everyone who’s got it knows to be wary.

He’s not living that life. Not again. Not ever again.

He sloshes out of the water and onto solid ground a good distance back. He’s a shit fighter, his best chance is to run.

He’s going to have to find a new place to stay, the current one is too close to the park. He’s going to lose his food source, that’s going to be a fucking bitch. He’ll have to move to a whole new part of the city, out of Will’s territory.

Fuck this is bad. He should have let the duck fucking die. Stupid piece of shit.

“Hey, Tommy,” Will is saying, he’s still got his hands up, like that makes him harmless.

“Easy, calm down man, we’re just talking. We’re partners, remember?” He takes a step back.

“I’m doing anything man, we’re just talking.”

“Yeah right,” Tommy snaps, “I know how it fucking goes. You’ll sell me out.”

“Never.” The word is so vehement, so final, that Tommy nearly believes it. “Loyalty, remember? You and me, we’re loyal to each other. I’m not selling you out.”

“I’m not healing for you. Or anyone.”

“I would never make you,” Will says. His eyes shine with determination, honesty, “and if anyone tried I’d fucking beat the shit out of them.”

Tommy shivers, only half because of the cold soaking through his clothes. The other half is because of the frigid tone in Will's voice. He's never really been all that intimidating but. Fuck. That was scary.

Will comes around the bushes carefully and sits on the bench. Tommy watches his every move, waiting for him to lunge, but he doesn't. He just sits, his arm thrown over the back, his legs crossed at the ankle. "Come on Toms," he says, softly, almost gently, "come sit with me, tell me what's been going on."

Tommy could run. Will would take a bit to get up and catch up to him, he could get to the alleyways, could lose him in them. He still doesn't know what his power is, but its probably not anything physical. There'd have been some indication of that by now. People with physical powers can't keep that shit to themselves. They're always showing it off.

Hesitantly, he takes a step closer to the bench. Will smiles and reaches into his bag to pull out a wrapped sandwich. "Come on, its still warm," he says, holding it out.

Tommy's mouth has always been faster than his brain, and his stomach has always been louder. He doesn't really stand a chance. He takes the sandwich and sits down.

He hasn't sat pressed to the armrest in a long time, he's let himself go, let himself start to trust Will. He can't do that now. No matter what he says, no matter how honestly he seems to be saying it. He digs his hip into the wrought iron and scarfs down the sandwich as quickly as he can.

He's still shivering by the time he gets halfway through it. The water is making his clothes cling to his body and the cold is seeping in. He crosses his empty hand over his chest, trying to hold the heat in. Fuck why did this have to happen *now*? Why couldn't he have slipped up later?

"You're shivering," Will says.

"No shit sherlock its fucking cold."

"You're wet, that's making it worse."

"Is that how the fucking cold works?" Tommy snaps, twisting to face him. He braces his foot, ready to haul ass.

"Toms," Will says, soft and sad, "I'm not going to--"

"Don't fucking bother." He hunches further in on himself and stuffs a quarter of the sandwich into his mouth. Its a bit more than he can effectively chew but he's done lingering here. He has to get moving.

"Tommy," Will says again, "you don't have to be scared."

"I'm not fucking scared of shit! Least of all you, bitch!" He's told a lot of lies in his life, that's probably one of the bigger ones.

Will gives him a sad look. Tommy stuffs the rest of the sandwich into his mouth and gets up. He darts away the first few steps, fully expecting that Will is going to come after him. Only he doesn't.

He stays sitting on the bench, just watching him.

Tommy hesitates.

"You can go if you want," Will says, "I won't come looking for you, I promise."

"Good," Tommy snaps, and he turns and runs.

He moves. Its less warm, less sheltered, but its further from the park and hopefully out of Will's territory. He goes back to scrounging in dumpsters, he goes back to hiding in alleyways and watching over his shoulder.

Its not fucking fun.

Its better than the alternative. Better than the locked doors, the smell of alcohol that wormed its way into his clothes and into his memories and into *him* so deep that Tommy's pretty sure that if you cut him he'd bleed it. Better than healing and healing and healing and harsh voices and hard hands and windowless rooms with padlocked doors.

But it still sucks.

He didn't realize how much he liked just...talking with Will. How much he enjoyed having a *goal* to work towards, even if that goal was just gathering gossip.

It feels hollow, scrounging to survive to tomorrow so he can scrounge to survive to the day after that. He's fucking lonely. He's tired, he's hungry, he's always fucking *cold*, like he's never going to be warm again. Like that icy water from the pond got absorbed into his fucking bones.

He's stupid, he's lonely, he's miserable, but above all, he's *stupid*. Apparently his heart is louder than his fucking mind too because he goes back to the goddamn park and he sits on the fucking bench. Like Will is going to come around the corner with a sandwich any fucking minute now.

The ducks paddle closer, quacking inquiringly.

They're all going to go hungry, because Tommy *should* be using this time to try and find fucking food. Something useful, instead of doing something dumb.

He stays on the bench anyway.

Someone crunches through the leaves behind him. Some dumb instagram asshole looking for a good picture, probably. Tommy hopes he's ruining their fucking shot.

Serves them right.

“Tommy?”

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Tommy's back, and he's staring at Will like he's just as surprised to find him here. He's staring at Will like he's about to bolt again. "Hey," Wilbur says. He makes the tension drain out of his body.

Slumped shoulders, one hand tucked casually into his pocket, his smile earnest and honest. Hopefully it doesn't show how shaky he feels. How fucking glad he is that the kid isn't dead in some dumpster somewhere.

"Hey," Tommy echoes him warily. He's on his feet, but Wilbur's blocking the way out of the park. If Tommy wants out of here he'll have to go past Will.

Chapter Notes

holy fuck y'all its been two days and this thing is creeping up on 1k kudos, I'm glad y'all are enjoying!

I finished writing out the sequel for this yesterday! Fool's Paradise has 10 chapters ready to go after the last chapter of this one. Hope you guys like this AU cause we're sticking around for awhile

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy's back. Wilbur's been bringing food but he didn't actually think--

Tommy's back, and he's staring at Will like he's just as surprised to find him here. He's staring at Will like he's about to bolt again. "Hey," Wilbur says. He makes the tension drain out of his body.

Slumped shoulders, one hand tucked casually into his pocket, his smile earnest and honest. Hopefully it doesn't show how shaky he feels. How fucking glad he is that the kid isn't dead in some dumpster somewhere.

"Hey," Tommy echoes him warily. He's on his feet, but Wilbur's blocking the way out of the park. If Tommy wants out of here he'll have to go past Will.

Wilbur doesn't get out of his way.

"You're back," he says instead, soft and slow, like luring in a stray cat. "I uh. Didn't think you would be."

“Me either,” Tommy says, so quiet Wilbur almost doesn’t hear it.

“I’m glad you are though,” Wilbur says carefully, “I was worried about you.”

Tommy scoffs, crossing his arms in a way that makes it look more like he’s hugging himself. “Why are *you* here?”

“It’s our meeting day,” Wilbur says with a helpless shrug. “I promised I’d bring you food every other day.”

“I haven’t fucking *been here* asshole,” Tommy snarls, like Wilbur wasn’t acutely aware of that. Like he hasn’t been waiting and worrying and sure that this meeting would never happen.

“Well you were this time.”

Tommy sputters, drawing further into himself, “yeah-- well-- that’s--cause I was-- I was--” he sighs, “being a fucking idiot.” He’s hanging back and trying to circle around Wilbur. Trying to get to the entrance of the park, to disappear back into the streets.

It’s only been a week but already his cheeks are starting to hollow again, already his eyes have deep bags under them. It’s rough on the streets, all on your own, especially in winter.

“We’re all idiots sometimes,” Wilbur says, still not moving out of his way. “But sometimes it ends up being a good thing.”

Tommy scoffs again, hedging a few steps to the side. Wilbur still doesn’t move.

“You aren’t looking too good, Toms,” he says, “you look tired. Hungry. Come on, one more meal? For old time’s sake?”

“Fuck off, why are you so fucking *clingy*?”

“I know what it’s like,” Wilbur says, “to be out on the street. I know it sucks. Come on Toms, it’s winter. You’re cold, you’re hungry, I’ve got food. It’s hot still. I can bring something warm to drink next time too. Tea or hot cocoa. I miss my partner in crime.”

“We weren’t partners,” Tommy snaps, “I was your informant.”

“And I miss your information,” Wilbur says, even though he definitely still doesn’t need the latest gossip from Tommy. “It made things a lot easier. Nearly got my ass busted a week ago because I didn’t know that stuff.”

A complete and utter lie. But all of this happened because Tommy thought that Wilbur would sell him out for his power. If he makes Tommy think he’s invaluable maybe he’ll stick around.

Maybe he’ll stop looking at Wilbur like he’s expecting him to do something terrible to him.

Carefully, *carefully*, he takes a step to the left, opposite the way Tommy's trying to go. Another. Tommy's eyes are flicking from him to the gap in the hedges that guard the edges of the park.

Wilbur sits on the bench and pulls the sandwich out of the bag. It's some toasted thing with cheese and ham. The sandwich itself didn't really matter what was important was that it was warm.

Even with the jacket Wilbur left for him, Tommy is shivering a little.

He sets the sandwich on the far side of the bench, Tommy's side.

The leaves crunch as Tommy approaches. He doesn't sit down, but he snatches the sandwich off the bench at least. "You're a fucking bitch," he snaps. Which is as close to a thank you as Tommy gets.

"You're welcome."

"Fuck off."

"No, I don't think I will." Wilbur makes a show of stretching his arms wide and laying them over the back of the bench. He crosses his legs at the ankle and tips his head back. Savoring the barely-there warmth of the afternoon sun as it falls on his face.

The leaves crunch a little more, a little closer. The bench creaks and shifts as Tommy sits down.

"Nobody came looking for me," he says.

"I didn't tell anyone about you."

"Why?"

"Loyalty, remember?"

"I ditched you."

"And?"

"Most people take that to mean that the whole deal is off, dumbass."

Wilbur shrugs, keeping his eyes closed.

"You're such a fucking weirdo."

He can feel the old wood of the bench bend as Tommy leans his weight back on it.

"I missed you," Wilbur says, hoping that the vulnerability will put Tommy more at ease. "It just wasn't the same without my partner in crime."

“We’re still not partners,” Tommy huffs. They’re quiet for a moment, and then, almost like he doesn’t mean to, Tommy says: “I missed you too.”

Wilbur’s heart fucking *melts* because he knows how Tommy is. He knows how the streets make you. You don’t just *tell* people that kind of shit. He desperately wants to hug the kid, but with how jumpy Tommy is that’s a bad option.

He’s skittish, still. Wilbur has to reel him in carefully, convince him to stay. “You have any good gossip for me?” He asks, like this is just another one of their meetings.

“A little,” Tommy replies, and he tells Wilbur what he knows. A lot of it is useless stuff, the few bits of good intel that are in there he already knows. The really good information is the stuff about Tommy himself. As the kid keeps talking, he seems to forget how wary he is. How long it’s been since they did this.

He tells Wilbur about his new place, how shitty it is. How the bus stops too close to it and he nearly chokes on the fumes every time. He tells Wilbur about the places he’s been getting food from. Dumpsters, again.

He tells Wilbur about what he gets up to, and Wilbur worries.

Part of him urges him to use his own power. To whisper sweet reassurances into Tommy’s ear. He wouldn’t know, he’d think it was his idea to come back with Will, to let Will take care of him. To let Will feed him something better than sandwiches and dumpster food.

The temptation is almost irresistible. But Wilbur resists all the same.

It would only last so long, and then Tommy would realize, and he’d run even further. He’d never trust anyone again, let alone Wilbur. So Wilbur bites his lip, keeping the sweet-song words behind his teeth.

“I should go,” Tommy says eventually.

“Okay,” Wilbur makes himself say. “I’ll be here, day after tomorrow.”

He hopes to god that Tommy’ll be here too, but he doesn’t ask. He doesn’t reach out and pull the kid into his arms, doesn’t even ruffle his hair the way Tommy had shyly started letting him before this whole debacle.

“Bye Will.” Tommy says.

“See you later Toms.”

“You’re home late,” Phil says when he comes in. “You missed lunch.”

“I had something,” Wilbur says, hanging his jacket on the hook. Shortly thereafter he hangs himself over Phil’s shoulders. Phil grunts, wings shifting to balance him as he takes Wilbur’s weight.

“He still gone?” Phil asks, voice soft, sympathetic.

“No, he was there,” Wilbur says, “but I don’t know if he’s going to come back.”

Phil’s hand rubs up and down his forearm where it hooks over his chest. “You can only hope, mate. You know how much I worried about you?”

“I can imagine,” Wilbur says, his voice muffled in the back of Phil’s shirt. He imagines that Phil was just as worried for him as he is for Tommy. Maybe even less, because Wilbur could take care of himself. Tommy is vulnerable.

He’s not got a power that can make anyone who tries to fuck with him turn around and walk away. He’s a healer. He’s a hot commodity on the darker markets, and he’s all on his own.

Not that Phil knows that, because Wilbur keeps his fucking word, even if Tommy doesn’t know it. He’ll earn that little shit’s trust if its the last thing he does.

Techno’s even pace walks through the room. “More misplaced affection, I see,” he rumbles. “Your kid’s back then?”

“This time,” Phil says, “not sure if he’ll be there next time. Will’s worried.”

Techno grunts, “I could track him down,” he offers.

Wilbur sighs, the temptation is *excruciating*. Tommy would never know, Techno’s methods are untraceable, undetectable. It would be to keep him safe.

“Can you tell them just to alert us if he’s in trouble?”

“I can *tell* them,” Techno says, “depends if they’ll listen or not.” He cocks his head, brow furrowing. “Well,” he says after a moment.

“Hm?” Phil prompts him.

“Apparently they like the little shit too, they’re *already* keeping an eye on him.”

That makes the guilt slide more easily in Wilbur’s gut. Not even Techno can completely control the shadows that follow him, its not *his* fault that they’re looking in on Tommy.

Well, not entirely, since they wouldn’t have even known about the kid if not for him. But they’re stalking him on their own initiative. Wilbur didn’t betray him.

Technically.

Phil pats his arm and Wilbur reluctantly lets him go. He turns, enveloping Will in his arms and wings. “You’re doing good,” he says softly, firmly. “You’re doing a good thing Will, I know its hard, and I know you’re worried, but you’re doing good. I believe in you.” He tugs Wilbur down to press his lips to his forehead.

Wilbur hums, shutting his eyes. He wasn't on the streets as long as Tommy seems to have been. He wasn't as prickly and skittish as Tommy is. But there was a day when Phil even trying to hug him would have sent him running for the hills never to return.

He hopes that one day Tommy trusts him as much as he trusts Phil.

God does he fucking hope that he'll trust him enough to at least let him get him off the street.

Chapter End Notes

Techno and Phil make an appearance! :D don't get too used to them this is the last time they show up til chapter 8 lmao

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

It was stupid to come back once. Its monumentally idiotic to come back again. So stupid that there isn't even a fucking word for how stupid it is. Maybe the first time Will wouldn't have had time to set up a trap.

This time he has.

But Tommy shows up anyway. He doesn't know why.

(Yes he does.)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It was stupid to come back once. Its monumentally *idiotic* to come back again. So stupid that there isn't even a fucking *word* for how stupid it is. Maybe the first time Will wouldn't have had time to set up a trap.

This time he has.

But Tommy shows up anyway. He doesn't know why.

(Yes he does.)

He sits on the bench, hunched in on himself, trying to keep the cold out of his bones and he waits. It doesn't take long.

"Hey Toms," Wilbur says, soft and gentle. Like he's talking to a stray dog.

Tommy won't admit that its more effective than his ego would like it to be. "Hey," he grunts back, curling his shoulders further in. Will sits down, braced with his elbows on his knees, hands dangling, one of them loosely holding the familiar bag.

"I'm glad you're here," Will says, "I was afraid you wouldn't be."

"I shouldn't be," Tommy says, surprising even himself with how honest it is.

"Why not?"

Tommy stares at him, there's no way Will is that fucking oblivious. The guy's weird sure--he's a fucking supervillian for god's sake--but he has to *know*. "...s dangerous."

"You're safe with me," Will says, "I wouldn't hurt you. And I won't let anyone else either."

He just *says* shit like that. Like its just...like its not *something*. Like its not *everything*. Everything Tommy's ever wished for, ever wanted. Everything Tommy knows he can't have.

He makes himself scoff, reminds himself that he can't trust that shit. Can't trust anyone. Not even Will.

Especially not Will.

Will digs into the bag and pulls out a wrapped sandwich, its still warm, the steam visible in the cold air. Tommy takes it, barely taking the time to unwrap it before he sinks his teeth in. Its another one of those fancy grilled cheeses, with the meat and shit on it.

The smell is familiar and mouthwatering and somehow his brain has linked it to safety and comfort.

There's a place that sells something like them where he moved. That has nothing to do with why he moved there. Its just a perk.

"Slow down," Will says, "its not gonna run away."

Tommy snorts but doesn't obey. The sandwich won't run, but he might have to, and he wants to have as much of it down as he can before then.

Will reaches into the bag again and pulls out a thermos. Tommy pauses mid-bite. That's not normal. Will promised food in exchange for information, a drink isn't part of that.

"Hot cocoa," Will says, "since its so cold." He pulls the cap off and pours something hot and brown and delicious smelling into it. He puts the thermos on the bench between them and holds the lid--oh, it makes a little cup that's cool as hell--between his hands.

Tommy watches as he takes a deep drink.

Hesitantly he reaches out and grabs the thermos. Its light, probably about half full. Will takes another drink of his half. Its probably not drugged, Will's got enough to knock himself out with it if it is.

Tommy sniffs it anyway, just to be sure. He's not actually sure what drugs would smell like, he's never had hot cocoa to begin with so he doesn't know what its *supposed* to smell like.

He takes a hesitant sip. Its chocolate and cinnamon, sweet and warm and delicious. He takes a bigger drink, wincing only slightly when he scalds his tongue. Its worth it.

The sandwich disappears in a few more bites, but Will is still sitting there, sipping on his half of the cocoa. "So," he says, "any good gossip?"

Tommy should go, should run and never come back. Instead he sighs and he tells Will about the stuff that he's been hearing.

If showing up once was stupid, and showing up twice was worse, showing up a third time is probably...hopeless. Tommy's hopeless. He's going to get pulled into some gang or scheme and he's never going to see the fucking light of day again because he can't resist some sandwiches and cocoa.

Because he can't resist Will's quiet company.

He wonders if he would mind being locked up too much if Will was at least able to visit him.

He hopes he doesn't have to find out.

There isn't a trap waiting for him when he comes to the park this time either. Just Will again, Will and the bag of food. Like the last week didn't even happen.

He leaves as soon as they're done and he catches the bus back to his new hideout. Its getting expensive, taking the bus all the way down there, but its too far to walk there and back in one day.

Tommy looks at his bag, at the ragged blanket and pitiful stash of food he's started building back up now that he has Wilbur's sandwiches to fall back on again.

"Fuck." he mutters and he gathers it all up and gets back on the bus.

His old hideout is still empty, its too small, too high, for most other kids to get to. Its cramped, but that just means that there's less space for the heat to escape to.

He keeps showing up, and Will keeps not betraying him. Its weird. Tommy can almost forget, sometimes, that Will knows literally the most dangerous information about him. That he holds Tommy's life, Tommy's freedom in his hands.

Because he never does anything with it. He never asks questions, he never looks at Tommy with the familiar calculating gleam in his eye. He just keeps bringing sandwiches and cocoa and Tommy keeps telling him the stuff he's heard.

He has no idea what Will does with this information. Will's not a big enough name to get into the papers and what he's doing must be subtle because there's never any talk about something Tommy could link back to him. If Tommy hadn't found the guy in a dumpster in full villain regalia he would never know he was a villain.

Well, maybe not *never* because Will is definitely prone to giving dramatic speeches about the injustices of society and shit. Even those are fairly lowkey when compared to some of the other villains out there.

Will's definitely dangerous though. Tommy has his ear to the ground for the guy, he knows that the villain who used to run things around here is just gone. Up and vanished one day, and now Will's moved in. And despite how subtle he is, nobody's trying to make him move out.

Its honestly one of the more stable territories out there.

The thing about capes and masks is that they're all territorial fuckers. They've carved up the city and everyone else tries to remember where all the lines are.

There isn't really a strict divide between hero and villain, functionally. Some heroes let people get away with all kinds of shit on their turf, some of them *do* all kinds of shady shit on their turf. Some villains are more strict about crime than the heroes are. Usually because they're keeping the biggest scores for themselves and shit but still.

Will seems pretty chill about the whole thing. There's no big name, or even medium name people moving in on his turf that Tommy's heard of, but he lets all sorts of minor shit go on. Muggings, petty theft, the usual sort of shit in a part of the city as poor as this one.

Maybe its different in the richer parts of the city, but for shitheaps like this one, the guy in charge makes a lot of difference. A strict hero can make the place miserable, a too-lax villain will let all sorts of shit go down and people will end up dead or injured in droves.

Will handles his turf like he's got *experience*.

Tommy doesn't see him patrolling it, or even see any lackeys patrolling it, but everyone just seems to *know* that this street isn't a place you try your luck.

All of which points to Will being a *goddamn scary motherfucker* but that is the *only* thing pointing to Will being anything but a loser who got his ass dumped in the garbage.

Will doesn't seem dangerous, and that should make it obvious how dangerous he is. Should make Tommy avoid him like the plague, the way he did the last guy who claimed this street.

Tommy stays, though, Tommy keeps showing up to the park and eating his food and lingering in his company. Despite how sure he is that eventually something will have to go wrong, nothing does.

Only apparently he should have kept his mouth shut on that particular observation because the next time he goes to the park Will is already there. He's sitting on the bench, his leg bouncing like he's anxious. Will is never anxious.

Tommy hesitates at the entrance to the park. Mentally, he runs through all the information he's picked up. Nothing sticks out as particularly worrying.

Will's clearly worried though, because he turns like he's looking for Tommy. He finds him, obviously, because Tommy is just hovering at the entrance to the park like an idiot instead of going to actual cover.

"Toms," Will says, standing in one quick, smooth motion. He looks less worried and more relieved now. Which is still fucking weird and Tommy doesn't like it. Will takes a few big strides towards him and Tommy warily backs away.

Will stops, drifts back a step himself, "hey," he says softer, half holding up his hands. "Easy, its just me."

“I know who you are, dickhead,” Tommy snaps, crossing his arms. Its been freezing today, even more so than usual. He was looking forward to the sandwich and cocoa. “Why’re you acting all weird.”

Will takes a deep breath, like he’s telling himself to calm down. “Sorry, I was just worried about you.”

“Why?” Fuck did someone figure out his powers? There are people out there looking for him, if they find him. *Fuck*, if they find him...

“Right,” Will says, “you probably don’t get the news. Its gonna be cold tonight.”

“Great.”

“I--” Will says, “I want to be sure you’re warm enough. They’re telling everyone to get to shelter. Real shelter.”

Fuck. The shelters are probably already full, and those places are dangerous as hell anyway. There’s no way his little blanket fort is gonna be enough to keep out the cold if it gets much worse. He’s barely been scraping by as it is.

“Toms,” Will says. His voice is serious, cautious. “I’m worried about you,” he says, “we’re partners and all, right? You know that?”

Tommy shuffles half a step back. This is the kind of speech that does *not* preceed something good. “Maybe.”

“So when I offer to let you stay at my apartment you know I’m not gonna hurt you. Or trap you, or anything else,” Will says.

Tommy’s retreat grinds to a halt. His brain does too. “What?”

“I want you to come home with me,” Will says, “you can leave as soon as it warms up again, I swear. I won’t try to keep you there. I’m the only one home for the weekend so it’ll just be us. Please Tommy.”

“I--” this is a bad idea. This is a monumentally stupid idea. He definitely should not say yes. But what other option is there? Try to squeeze his way into a shelter? Hope that nobody starts shit there? They always fucking do. “I can leave,” he asks.

“As soon as its warmed up,” Will nods.

Tommy bites his lip. “Fine.”

Will slumps, all the tension draining out of his shoulders. “Thank you.”

Tommy crosses his arms, “you’re the one letting the homeless kid sleep on your couch man. Pretty sure you’re not the one who’s supposed to be grateful.”

Will smiles and its weirdly sappy and soft and Tommy's stupid heart longs to go closer to him. To tuck himself into Will's side, under the stupid brown coat he wears. Warm and safe.

"Come on," Will says, "you need to get anything from where you're staying?"

"Uh, yeah. I'll just," Tommy makes a motion over his shoulder. Taking a hesitant step back.

Will nods, "alright, I'll wait here."

"Cool." Tommy turns and jogs back towards his hideout.

He snatches his bag, it has, well, not *clean* clothes, but different clothes. He hesitates over his blanket, but its probably best to take everything he can. Even if everyone's getting off the streets you never know when someone's gonna come by and take your shit.

He turns back towards the park. A little curl of dread settles in his stomach. What if Will isn't there? What if he changed his mind, or decided Tommy was taking too long?

But Will's never not been there. Even when Tommy didn't come, Will did. He came to the empty park and waited for who the hell knows how long.

Tommy doesn't know why.

(Yes he does.)

Of course Will is waiting for him when he gets back, of course he smiles and the tension falls out of his shoulders. Like he was worried that Tommy would back out.

"C'mon, its a bit of a walk," Will says, taking off down the street at an easy pace.

Tommy follows him, slotting into place at his shoulder. Will smiles at him and his arm twitches, like he wants to throw it over Tommy's shoulders. But he restrains himself.

Tommy isn't sure if he's glad about that or not.

Chapter End Notes

It wouldn't be a Silver Fic (TM) if there weren't ✨Touch Starvation ✨

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

He grabs his thickest sweatpants and softest sweater, hopefully he can convince Tommy to keep them.

Hopefully, one day, he can convince Tommy to stay.

He's so painfully skittish, ready for betrayal in a way that makes Wilbur want to go out hunting. For now, Wilbur is pretty sure that he'll book it as soon as it warms up again.

He definitely won't want to stick around long enough for Phil and Techno to get back.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It's kind of like bringing in a feral cat. Tommy lingers in the doorway, looking around like he's about to set foot on an alien planet. Or a minefield.

Wilbur glances around too, but there's no weapons lying around, nothing that would hint at who else lives here with him. Nothing that should spook Tommy and send him bolting out into the cold.

Cautiously, Tommy slides a foot in, and then the other. "This is. Fancy," he says uneasily.

Wilbur glances around. The apartment is spacious, but it's not done up in that minimalistic modern style so he doesn't really register it as fancy. There's no real attempt at interior decor, but there is Phil's massive fish tank against the wall across from the door. "yeah, well, if you're gonna be a villain."

That cracks the ice, Tommy snickers, "fair enough I guess."

Wilbur tosses his coat over the back of the couch and steps into the kitchen. "You hungry?" he asks despite knowing full well that Tommy is. He's a street kid, he's always hungry. Even if he's not he'll eat. You never turn down food.

"Sure," Tommy says predictably. He's still hovering, his bag over one shoulder, hand fiddling with a frayed string from the strap. The thing looks like it's about to fall apart, Wilbur wonders if he can get Tommy to accept a new one.

He shouldn't push, he knows how skittish Tommy is about gifts, how unbelievably lucky he was to get the kid to come here. He can't mess this up. If he's ever going to get Tommy off the streets this is going to have to be a good experience, a safe place.

But god does he want to get Tommy a new bag, warmer clothes, a soft place to sleep instead of whatever hole he's been living in. Three meals a day instead of one sandwich every other

day.

He knows how hard it is on the streets and he was there for a fraction of the time he suspects Tommy's been out there.

How did Phil bear this? Going to sleep every night knowing that Wilbur was out there. How did he keep from just scooping him up in a blanket and never letting him out?

Well, Wilbur could have *made* him let him out, and then he'd have been gone. That probably made it easier.

He's going through the motions of making Tommy's usual sandwich automatically. Tommy is lingering at the edge of the kitchen, not quite touching the counter, or anything else.

"If you want," Wilbur says causally, "you can do whatever. Sit on the couch, sit on the counter, explore, I don't care."

"The counter?" Tommy asks dubiously.

"I do," Wilbur shrugs with a cheeky grin. "It's hardly the worst thing those counters have had on them." There has been no shortage of emergency first aid done on the counter.

Also no one has any qualms about using it to work on whatever weird project they're doing. Techno in particular is bad about getting whatever the fuck is in his sticky grenades on it.

"There's hot water too," he says, knowing how rare the chance to get really clean was.

He's not sure Tommy's gonna go for it. He's jumpy, and the last thing you want to do when you're jumpy is go make yourself more vulnerable.

"The door locks," Wilbur says, but Tommy knows he's a villain. Even if he doesn't know quite how high a caliber villain he is. They both know that a simple bathroom lock wouldn't really be able to stop him.

But Tommy surprises him. He shrugs and grunts, "yeah. Thanks."

Will doesn't bother trying to hide his smile, "you can borrow some of my clothes too if you want. I'm only a little taller than you, we can wash your stuff in the meantime."

Tommy hesitates for a second, likely debating the pros and cons of having clean clothes versus possibly having to abandon them if this goes south. Or maybe just wondering why Wilbur is being so kind. Maybe both.

"Sure," he says, surprising Wilbur again.

"Cool, lemme grab you some stuff."

He grabs his thickest sweatpants and softest sweater, hopefully he can convince Tommy to keep them.

Hopefully, one day, he can convince Tommy to stay.

He's so painfully skittish, ready for betrayal in a way that makes Wilbur want to go out *hunting*. For now, Wilbur is pretty sure that he'll book it as soon as it warms up again. He definitely won't want to stick around long enough for Phil and Techno to get back.

Which really, really sucks because Phil would definitely know how to put him at ease. Phil would know how to convince him to stay, how to show him that they're worthy of trust.

Nobody could be scared of Phil.

The Angel of Death, well, yeah. Everyone's terrified of Phil when he's like that, but Tommy need never face the Angel. Even if he does meet him, he'll be under his protection.

He doesn't know it yet, but Tommy is nestled safe in the heart of three of the most dangerous people in the city. Phil and Techno haven't met him yet, but they'll protect who Wilbur protects.

They would protect Tommy, if he'd just let them.

He makes some soup to go with the sandwiches while Tommy's in the shower, because if he's gonna have the kid here he's going to get as much food in him as possible.

His phone pings from his coat pocket.

Dadza: How'd it go?

Me: Good. He's jumpy but he came back with me. He's in the shower

Dadza: I'm glad. Tell us when we're good to come back. Love you

Me: Love you too

Wilbur puts the phone away before Tommy comes back, no doubt he'd take the sight of it in Wilbur's hand as some sign that he'd been betrayed.

Once Tommy trusts him enough to tell him about them, there are going to be people who *suffer*.

The shower shuts off, Wilbur goes back to the kitchen and gets a bowl of soup and a sandwich on the counter waiting for Tommy. He sets up his own spot beside him, a stool between them.

Tommy still hesitates at the mouth of the hall, taking in the room like he's expecting a squad of goons to be waiting for him. He's practically drowning in Wilbur's clothes, the sweatpants have the drawstring pulled tight and the sweater is pushed roughly up to his elbows. The sleeves are already starting to fall again.

"Hey Toms," Wilbur says as casually as possible. He dips his sandwich in the soup and takes a bite. "Lunch is ready."

“Thanks,” Tommy says. Wilbur’s not seen him this quiet and hesitant since he was first coming back after the week he ran. They eat quietly, Tommy is tense but he’s slowly starting to relax. The warmth and meal is catching up to him, Wilbur thinks. He might actually fall asleep if Wilbur is careful.

“You want to watch something?” he asks once Tommy’s drained the last of his soup.

He only shrugs, but he follows Wilbur to the couch willingly enough. Wilbur throws on some baking show, something quiet and low-stress. Tommy is curled up on the far corner of the couch, but he’s not tense. He’s resting his head on the arm, his hands curled up under his chin and ever so slowly, his eyes are starting to shut.

Wilbur holds still, but doesn’t allow an ounce of tension into his body. He keeps his eyes on the screen, but he has no idea what’s going on in the show. His attention is fully on Tommy as he finally falls asleep.

His brow is a little furrowed, he’s curled up in the corner, but he’s sleeping. He’s clean and fed and warm and he isn’t going to be freezing to death on the streets tonight.

Tommy sleeps peacefully for about an hour--during which Wilbur fights himself on throwing a blanket over the kid. On the one hand, it feels wrong to just let him sleep without one, on the other, he’s likely to wake up if anything touches him or if Wilbur moves around too much. Besides, the apartment is heated, he’s not cold without one.

In the end he sits there with a blanket in his lap, watching for any sign that Tommy is in the slightest bit too cold. Which is probably the only reason he sees it.

The way Tommy’s face pinches into worry, then sorrow, then fear. The slight uptick of his breath, the way his hands clench into fists. A bad dream.

“Hey,” Wilbur whispers softly, hoping to wake Tommy up without scaring him too much, “Toms? Its okay buddy, you’re with me.”

A tiny noise of confusion leaves Tommy’s throat.

“Its Will,” Wilbur says, “you’re with me. I’ll keep you safe, remember? You’re safe.”

Tommy mumbles something unintelligible. His eyes are still shut, but he’s turned a bit more towards Wilbur.

“I’ve got you,” Wilbur reminds him, “I’m right here. Nothing can hurt you with me here.”

One eye cracks open, just barely enough for Wilbur to see blue. He smiles, “hey.”

Tommy closes his eye again and snuggles into the couch.

“You want a blanket?” Wilbur asks him.

Tommy nods sleepily, clearly still not fully awake.

“Alright, incoming,” Wilbur says, and gently spreads the throw over him. He tucks it high on his shoulders and Tommy grabs the edge, tugging it closer to feel the softness of the fabric. An approving murmur, and then his breath evens out again. Goes steady and deep.

Wilbur sits back down and belatedly realizes what just happened. Tommy was having a nightmare, and having Wilbur there didn’t spook him, it calmed him down. He didn’t even have to use his powers.

Maybe, despite how skittish he is, maybe Tommy trusts him at least a little.

Chapter End Notes

Soft Content (TM)

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

“Hey Toms,” Will says, turning the water off and carefully patting the burn dry with a rag. It looks bad, still. Its only gotten redder, and the blisters have really taken off now. Tommy can see where the individual drops landed. “Do me one more favor if you don’t mind?”

And here it is. Here it comes. He’s known, ever since Will caught him healing that stupid duck that it was going to happen. He’s known in his heart that this day would come, this moment.

“Get the first aid kit? Its in the bathroom, under the sink. Should be left side but sometimes it gets shoved towards the back.”

Chapter Notes

You guys get the Softest chapter today, enjoy.

Warning for hot water burns

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

He wakes up and for a second he panics. Because he’s definitely not in his hideout, because he can hear someone moving around near him.

He sits up and a blanket falls off his shoulders to pool in his lap and Tommy remembers. Realizes that he’s not on the streets. He’s in Will’s apartment, under Will’s blanket, in Will’s clothes.

He turns and there’s Will himself, doing something on the counter where they’d eaten soup and sandwiches. Like he can sense Tommy’s eyes on him, Will turns. “Hey, you’re up.”

“Yeah. Sorry for falling asleep.”

“Nah, you looked like you needed it, and its not like we’ve got anything pressing going on.”

Tommy shrugs. Its weird, being indoors and not being a nuisance, not counting down the seconds, not watching the staff, waiting for the moment he’s lingered too long. Waiting to be kicked out onto the streets again. Its been a long time since he’s been somewhere he could just *be*.

He slouches against the arm of the couch. He feels drowsy still, like he might just go back to sleep. "How long was I out?"

"Few hours," Will says, "its probably about another hour before I start thinking about dinner but if you want a snack I can get you something."

"You don't have to," Tommy says, pulling the blanket around himself.

"I know," Will says, "but if you're hungry I will."

"I'm...fine," Tommy says. He never turns down food, but he doesn't want to blow this. He can't be too much of a bother or Will might get tired of having him here. Its only been a few hours, he just has to make it til morning. It'll be warmer tomorrow night, he'll go back to his hideout, he'll leave Will's apartment.

And it'll be worth it if he can keep from annoying Will too much. Tommy knows, alright, he knows that he's annoying. He's loud, he's jumpy, he gets mean if he feels like he's cornered.

He can't afford to do that with Will. He can't be like that with Will. He can't lose this. He can't lose Will.

So he keeps to himself, he does his best not to ask for things or even slightly hint that he needs or wants something. He sits on the couch and does his best to be unobtrusive.

There's a huge fish tank against the far wall. Filled with fish and colorful rocks, or maybe that's coral. Tommy's never seen a tank like this up close, it's not like he got taken on field trips to the aquarium. It's nice, peaceful. He watches the fish swim and stays out of the way.

It works for the hour or so before dinner.

When Will starts clattering in the kitchen, Tommy gets up and hovers at the edge. "Do you need help?" he asks because he's pretty sure that's what a guest is supposed to do? It seems right?

He gets most of his meals from the garbage, its not like anyone's taught him manners, alright?

"Nope! This is simple stuff, I make it all the time," Will chirps, "but you can keep me company."

Tommy's certainly not gonna tell the man no. Even if he didn't want the excuse to be closer to him, to talk to him. He doesn't understand Will sometimes, but he also can't keep himself away from him. Even though he's definitely dangerous.

Will's making spaghetti, it looks like, from the pot of water he leaves to boil on the stove and the sauce he's heating beside it. Tommy inhales deeply, shutting his eyes to savor the smell. When he was younger he'd lived near an italian place, the old lady had left him stuff out on occasion. She'd been nice.

That was where he'd been found out. That was the last place he was free before--

He wonders how long she'd kept leaving things out for him before she realized he was never coming back.

He hopes she knows how much she helped, how often he wonders about her.

Wilbur is humming as he stirs the sauce, he's got a good voice. Tommy thinks. Its not like he's an expert.

He lays his head on his crossed arms, watching Will move fluidly around the kitchen. The timer beeps and Will checks a bit of pasta. Apparently its good enough because he hums happily and sets up a weird bowl in the sink. Some kind of drainer bowl apparently, because its got holes all over it and he's dumping the pasta water into it.

Only something goes wrong. Because the pot slips where its braced on the edge of the counter. Tommy watches it go in what feels like slow motion. The pot slips, Will gasps, and then he cries out.

Tommy jolts to his feet, the stool clatters behind him, teetering on the edge of falling over. Will sets the pot heavily on the counter, "Shit," he mutters. "Fuck. Okay. *fuck*." He hisses a breath through his teeth and flicks the faucet to turn on the water.

He dunks his arm under it but Tommy can see that the skin is already red and starting to blister. He's breathing is a bit strained, his shoulders tense. Tommy hesitates, hovering uncertainly behind him.

Will glances over his shoulder, "whoops," he says a bit weakly.

Tommy snorts, disbelieving. "Whoops? You just burnt the shit out of your arm, man."

"Yeah, well, believe it or not I'm not usually allowed in the kitchen."

"I fucking wonder why!"

Will laughs, turning his arm to get more of the burn under the flow of water. "Fuck that stings."

He's trying to play it off, but Tommy can see the tension in his jaw, in his shoulders. The way his hand is clenched into a tight fist. He runs his free hand through his hair. "Well, dinner's gonna be a bit. Would you turn off the burner on that sauce for me?"

"Uh, yeah." Tommy says, finally taking that last step into the kitchen. He flicks the stove off and then just...hovers. He's never been in a kitchen, not that he can remember. Even before he was on the street he wasn't allowed near the food. He got what he was given, he wasn't allowed to go anywhere near the rest of it.

They had to keep him loyal somehow, afterall.

And he's always been ruled by his stomach.

“Hey Toms,” Will says, turning the water off and carefully patting the burn dry with a rag. It looks bad, still. Its only gotten redder, and the blisters have really taken off now. Tommy can see where the individual drops landed. “Do me one more favor if you don’t mind?”

And here it is. Here it comes. He’s known, ever since Will caught him healing that stupid duck that it was going to happen. He’s known in his heart that this day would come, this moment.

“Get the first aid kit? Its in the bathroom, under the sink. Should be left side but sometimes it gets shoved towards the back.”

“I--what?”

It feels like Will has started speaking a foreign language. Like he’s not processing the words. Is this a stroke? That’s a stroke thing right? Is he having a stroke? Or is that a heart attack?

“Its got burn cream,” Will says like that is in any way what Tommy is confused about. “Dad’s really uptight about being prepared for *everything*.” He laughs and then blows a little on the burn, wincing.

“Okay,” Tommy says. His voice sounds hollow, lost. He feels a little lost. Like he just looked up and realized that he’s in a strange place when he thought he was somewhere familiar. Like the world’s tilted on its axis and he’s the only one stumbling in the new norm.

He turns and goes back to the bathroom. He looks under the cabinet, Will was right, the first aid kit did get shoved to the back. Its a big kit, big as those brief cases that fancy business dudes have. The weight hardly registers as he carries it back to the kitchen.

“Here,” he says, his voice still sounds too soft, too small.

“Thank you,” Will says, “throw it up on the counter for me?”

Tommy hefts it up and Will gives him a grateful smile, “thanks. Let me just,” he flicks the latches and digs through the contents.

Surely he’ll remember, he’ll realize, that he’s got something *better* than a first aid kit here. Right next to him. He could just ask. Tommy owes him anyway. For the food, for the chance to get out of the cold.

Will pulls something out of the kit with a triumphant hum and opens a tube that declares itself ‘burn cream’ on the outside.

“You--” Tommy says, then stops himself. Is he really going to remind him?

He *owes* Will though. He got hurt making food *for Tommy* on top of everything else.

“Hm?” Will says, squeezing a line of goo onto his arm. He grits his teeth and gingerly starts spreading it over the burn.

“I could--” Tommy says softly.

Will stops and looks at him, his face is worried, gentle, soft. “No.”

“What?”

“No. I don’t need you to do that Toms, its just a burn. I should have been more careful. It’ll be fine in a little bit, you don’t need to heal me.”

“But--” It doesn’t make sense. Will doesn’t make sense.

Will looks at him, and its so soft and sad and utterly incomprehensible. “I told you,” he says, “I *promised* you, I’ll never make you heal me, or anyone else.”

“You’re not.” Tommy bites his lip, curls his hand into a fist. “You’re not making me, I’m offering. I owe you.”

“No you don’t,” Will says like its that easy, “I’m *glad* you came home with me, I’m glad you’re here warm and safe instead of out on the streets tonight.”

He just *says* that shit. Still. It takes Tommy by surprise every fucking time.

“Give me your dumb fucking arm,” he growls and before he can think better of it or talk himself out of it he snatches Will’s wrist and yanks it closer. The trance settles in easily, so easily, like it always does. Everything is warm and soft and fuzzy at the edges. His head’s floaty and his limbs loose.

Will’s burn is worse than the cut on the duck’s wing, it takes more power, but Tommy’s been fed and he just slept. He can spare the energy.

Will comes out of the trance before him. The one he’s healing always does, that’s what makes his power so fucking risky. He stands there swaying, trying to figure out how thoughts work while the person he’s healing is free to do whatever the fuck they want with him.

Will tugs his wrist gently out of Tommy’s hands, he makes a sad little noise to see it go. He likes Will. He wants to hug him, he wants Will to hug him. Its easy to let his weight shift forward, to fall against Will’s side.

They stumble half a step before Will catches them, “hey, hey, hey, easy Toms. Are you okay? Look at me.”

Tommy opens his eyes--oh, he’d shut them?--and looks up into Will’s face. He looks worried, he always looks so worried. Tommy doesn’t remember the last time someone was worried about him.

His hair looks really soft.

Tommy reaches a shaky hand up to touch it, but Will catches his wrist. “Hey,” he says again, “what’s--is this normal? Are you okay?”

Tommy hums and nods and lets himself slouch more against Will.

“Oof, okay, alright, let’s. Uh. Let’s go sit on the couch okay?”

Tommy hums again and lets Will half drag, half carry him over to the couch. He could walk but it seems like a lot of effort to make his legs move when Will can get them over there just fine. He presses his cheek to Will’s chest and sighs happily. His sweater is really soft.

Everything is so soft, and warm and there is golden light spilling over them and the world seems to be so slow and gentle right now. Like everything’s moving in slow motion and is made out of...soft things. There’s a soft blanket on the couch, Will’s wrapping it around his shoulders. He’s really nice.

Tommy grabs his hand as it adjusts the blanket and tugs at it. “Sit w’ me.” he mumbles.

“Are you sure?” Will asks, which is a dumb question. Will’s really nice but he’s really dumb too. He just *says things* and he *does things* without ever even considering what Tommy owes him for them.

He nods and tugs at Will’s wrist again.

“Alright,” Will says, “okay, here we go. There you are.”

Tommy shoves himself under Will’s arm, wrapping his arms around his chest and tucking his head under his chin. Will’s so warm and nice and soft. Its *great*.

“Hi,” Will says, a little bit of a laugh in his voice. He’s got a great laugh too. Sometimes Tommy makes him laugh and its the best thing.

“Hi,” Tommy mumbles back to him.

“You okay?”

Tommy hums and burrows deeper into his side. He sighs happily.

“Alright,” Will says again, “that’s good. I’m glad.”

Tommy hums again. This is great. Will’s great.

Will gently rubs his hand up and down Tommy’s back, all the way up to the back of his head and all the way down to the bottom of his ribcage. Tommy finds some way to relax even more against him.

“Thank you for healing my arm,” Will says, “you didn’t have to, you know.”

“Wanted to,” Tommy grumbles.

“Yeah?”

He nods. “You’re so nice, and you didn’t even ask for it. Everyone who knows does, and then they keep asking, and then they’re not asking anymore.”

“I’ll never ask,” Will murmurs, “you never have to heal for me.”

Tommy hums again and tightens his arms around Will’s chest. He doesn’t know if he believes him, but he wants to. Maybe that counts as trust.



Chapter End Notes

Bonus bit of World Building ish stuff: the layout of SBI's apartment! I doodled this up yesterday, and there might be some times when its not quite accurate? I'm not sure, mostly this is the layout tho.

Everyone was calling that they'd end up cuddling on the couch the minute Will talked about bringing Tommy home and yeah, I have A Brand you know. Gotta maintain that reputation.

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Wilbur wakes up to sunlight on his face, a too-bony elbow in his stomach, and a dilemma. Tommy hisses, freezing above him and Wilbur knows he has two choices. He could open his eyes and try to convince Tommy to stay. Try to talk him down from that prey-animal terror that is making his breath so shaky.

Or he could let him go.

Let him retreat back to his hideaway and hope that he comes back.

He can try to convince him to stay, or he can trust that he will come back.

Chapter Notes

more soft content!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Maybe its weird, maybe its wrong, but Wilbur can't help but take a picture. Tommy has fallen asleep again, cuddled up to him and for once he looks completely cozy and comfortable. He's still too thin, there's still bags under his eyes, but he looks peaceful. He looks happy, even.

His head is tucked under Wilbur's chin, his arms still locked around him, his legs nearly curled up in Will's lap.

Will's pretty sure he's not going to be nearly as content or relaxed when he wakes up. Will even *knowing* about his powers nearly shattered the fragile trust that they'd built up.

Paired with the slurred confession Tommy had made into his throat makes Will pretty sure that the kid is going to bolt as soon as he can. God does Will want to hunt down the fuckers that did this to him, that made bold, wild Tommy scared.

He wants to make *them* scared.

And he knows a couple of guys who will help him out.

He smiles, and its more sharp, more dangerous than the ones he lets Tommy see, but Tommy isn't awake.

He sends the picture to Phil. Phil may not know about Tommy's powers, but he knows pretty much everything else. He knows how tenuous the trust is between them, how thin a line

Wilbur walks every time he talks to the kid. Trying to navigate all of the hidden tripwires that will send Tommy running like a scared rabbit into the night.

His phone pings a moment later and Will quickly puts it on silent. Tommy doesn't so much as twitch. Apparently his powers take a lot out of him.

Will pulls him closer and presses his nose into his hair. Its soft, and it smells like his shampoo. Not dirty and greasy, for once Tommy is well taken care of.

Dadza: awww, he wear himself out?

Me: yeah, used his powers a bit. Apparently they're expensive.

Dadza: Is it going okay?

Me: Fairly. I think he's gonna run again as soon as he can stand, he's sensitive about his powers.

Dadza: He'll come back

Me: how can you be so sure?

Dadza: you came back, didn't you? He's a smart kid, he knows you care, he's come back once. Just keep working on his trust. One day he'll stay

Me: you're a sap

Dadza: <3

Will snorts and sets his phone aside. He remembers, the first time he'd accidentally used his powers on Phil. How he'd gone haring off into the night, certain that Phil now knew, now realized what a monster he'd invited into his home. Certain that Phil would call the heroes to come and deal with him.

Mental powers have never been widely accepted, certainly not ones that can so effortlessly usurp someone else's will.

But Phil hadn't called the heroes--which, in retrospect had been a highly unlikely scenario--hadn't been angry. He'd been waiting, when Wilbur came skulking back, trying to get the jacket he'd left behind. Phil had been sitting on the front steps, holding it, just waiting for Will to come back. He'd greeted him with a smile and soft words.

Will had been sure it was a trap, but he'd come closer anyway. Too desperate for warmth that couldn't be provided by the jacket. Phil had never called the heroes on him, had never been angry, or disgusted, or even worried about Will's powers being used on him.

Tommy will run, that's for certain, but Wilbur is less sure if he'll come back. He hopes, god does he hope, but he won't know until he does.

For now, he scoots over til he can lay on the couch with Tommy curled up on top of him and pulls the blanket over them both. There's still the spaghetti in the kitchen, noodles and sauce left to cool in the air, but he can clean that up later. Who knows how long this will last.

Wilbur wakes up to sunlight on his face, a too-bony elbow in his stomach, and a dilemma. Tommy hisses, freezing above him and Wilbur knows he has two choices. He could open his eyes and try to convince Tommy to stay. Try to talk him down from that prey-animal terror that is making his breath so shaky.

Or he could let him go.

Let him retreat back to his hideaway and hope that he comes back.

He can try to convince him to stay, or he can trust that he will come back.

Wilbur grumbles, and turns his face into the couch, and pretends to go back to sleep. Tommy sighs carefully, and his footsteps tiptoe through the apartment, the rustle of his backpack-- Wilbur hadn't gotten the chance to try to talk him into taking the one he's got in the closet-- the soft thump of his shoes, and then the click of the door.

It shuts behind him soft as a whisper.

Wilbur sits up, he can faintly hear Tommy making his way out of the building. There's still time to go after him, to try and talk to him.

Instead he gets up and cleans up the spaghetti, and he hopes.

He wanders around the apartment, trying to think of ways he could have done things differently, hoping that Tommy will be there tomorrow afternoon. Worrying that he won't be.

What if he runs again? What if he gets hurt? What if it gets too cold again? Does he have enough blankets? No, of course he doesn't. He's only got what he can fit in that ragged backpack.

Why didn't Wilbur think to offer him the one from his closet sooner? He could have at least gone back out into the cold with whatever stuff Wilbur could squirrel away in the pockets.

Its a long day.

Phil and Techno get home that night, and Phil immediately envelops him in a warm hug. "You did good," he murmurs, "he'll come back."

"What if he doesn't?" Wilbur asks.

"Then I'll go find him for you," Techno grunts, ruffling his hair. Wilbur smacks his hand away and tries to smooth his hair back down.

“Don’t you dare, you’d make him run the minute he set eyes on you.”

“He wouldn’t see me coming,” Techno snorts. “You think I can’t hide from one kid? No matter how paranoid he is.”

Wilbur snorts, but Techno is probably right. The shadows that he commands already like Tommy, if Techno tells them what he’s doing is for the kid’s own good they’d help him in a heartbeat.

Hopefully it won’t come to that.

“Give him a chance,” Phil says, “he’ll be there, you’ll see. Its scary to trust, let him warm up to the idea at his own pace.”

Wilbur sighs, “I know, but I worry about him. He’s vulnerable out there.”

“He’s made it this long without you mother henning him,” Techno grunts, “he knows what he’s doing.”

“He’ll be there,” Phil says firmly, “you’ll see.”

Wilbur can’t help himself, he goes early. He makes the usual sandwiches and get the thermos of hot cocoa made. He also brings along the bag and all of the things that he slipped into the pockets.

The park is empty when he gets there, of course it is. Its cold as fuck out and he’s here early for their meeting. He sits on the bench, elbows on his knees, and he waits. It still hasn’t snowed this year, which he’s grateful for, but its the still, frozen sort of cold, where everything is covered with frost.

The sort of cold that creeps into your bones the longer you’re out in it. Tommy’s been out in it for a day and a half. With only his thin clothes and the jacket that Wilbur got him earlier. He didn’t even keep the clothes Will loaned him.

They’re in the bag, along with a thick blanket.

But god does he wish that Tommy would just come home with him.

A shoe scuffs from the entrance to the park. Wilbur forces himself to stay relaxed, to stay calm. Tommy is good at picking up on anything out of the ordinary and he’s extremely wary of any deviation.

Tommy hovers by the bench, rocking on his heels like he’s considering bolting.

“Hey Toms,” Wilbur says, like this is any normal day.

“Hey.”

Tommy watches him carefully and Wilbur just as carefully pulls the sandwich out of the bag. “Got any good gossip?”

“A little.”

Tommy sits down beside him and Wilbur conceals a sigh. He came, he’s not running, he’s not lost and alone out in the city. He’s right here where, for now, Will can keep an eye on him.

He’s also keeping an eye on Will. Between bites and between words. His eyes are darting around the park, like he’s waiting for some trap to be sprung.

“You keeping warm enough?” Wilbur asks him.

Tommy shrugs, “I’ll live.”

But he might not, is the thing. Its only early winter, its going to get worse. “I brought you some stuff,” Wilbur says, “to help keep warm.”

“Why?” Tommy asks, tense and suspicious.

“Because I don’t want you to freeze to death?”

Tommy crosses his arms, “I’ll be fine. I’ve been through winter before.”

“Fine isn’t enough,” Wilbur says, forcing his voice to be calm and not as desperate as he feels. “Its just some old stuff, you don’t owe me for it, I was going to get rid of it anyway.”

Tommy finally looks at the bag. He bites his lip, clearly debating between accepting and rejecting. Wilbur wishes he knew how to convince him that it wasn’t a trap, that kindness existed, that Wilbur wanted to help, not hurt.

“You sure?” Tommy asks, but there’s a hunger in his gaze now.

“Absolutely.”

Tommy takes the bag and Wilbur feels the worry in his chest ease just a little bit.

Chapter End Notes

:D Tomorrow is the return of Phil and Techno!

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

See end notes for warnings

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The mall is in chaos. People are running, screaming--god so much screaming--there's a child wandering through the crowd. Tommy nearly trips over her, she's lost and sobbing for her parents. The flow of the crowd moves him past her almost as soon as he's registered that she's there.

Half of some fashionable store is collapsed in on itself, there's chunks of concrete and drywall scattered through the paths and people are tripping, slipping, injuring themselves.

Over the screams Tommy can hear the girl--or maybe some other kid--wailing. Nobody stops, they all just keep running. Running is their only hope.

Tommy didn't even see them, but he knows who it is. They all know, as soon as the first notes of Siren's song hit the air.

There are three of them, there's always three.

Siren comes first, singing of destruction and terror, stirring up the crowd, sending them running for whatever safety they think they might be able to find.

Close on his heels is the Blade, armed to the teeth, his shadows seething around him, waiting to indulge their insatiable bloodlust.

And in their wake strolls the Angel of Death himself. Compared to his companions he almost seems mild, an easy, affable smile on his face.

He doesn't need to look terrifying. He simply *is*.

The Blade's shadows are in the crowd now. Snapping dark teeth and laughing with hissing voices at those who scream and stumble. They're harrying the back of the crowd, picking at the weak like a pack of wolves.

Tommy pushes himself to run faster, to dart over rubble and elbow his way through the group. Away from the edge. The last thing he wants is to get noticed.

Only as they approach the central plaza of the mall, the shadows are darting ahead, through the crowd. People ahead of him are stopping, turning around, screaming that the shadows are

blocking the way. Tommy gets shoved through the edge of the crowd, into the no-man's land that's sprung up between the shadows and everyone else.

One of them locks eyes with him, or whatever passes for eyes in a shadow. It's an unclear shape, something human, something animal, something *wrong*, that watches him with gaping pits. There are tiny red embers of light deep in the darkness.

The crowd huddles nervously together, there are screams as desperate people try to rush past the shadows and are repelled.

Tommy shoves through the crowd, back to the center.

There is a decorative fountain ahead of him. Some commemorative piece of a hero from fifty years ago. He holds aloft the world itself, cradled safe in his palm.

There is a thump overhead and Tommy looks up to see that the Angel Death has landed on top of the globe. The world beneath his heel. Fuck .

A stone hero decades dead cannot save them.

The crowd screams, then hushes itself as they all stare up at the Angel, waiting for his judgement. "Well," he says, almost friendly, "lovely day for a trip out to the mall, hm?"

An uneasy murmur rises to answer him, his gaze sweeps over the crowd, but none dare to meet his eye. He smiles, dangerous and sharp.

"I don't suppose any of you would know where I might find the mayor," he asks politely, "I heard he was supposed to be here today and I really need to talk to him. I keep trying to set up an appointment but he's a hard man to get ahold of." He laughs at his own joke, he is the only one.

"That's alright," The Angel of Death says, "we'll all just wait for him here, how about that?"

Fuck. They're all hostages.

Where the *fuck* are the heroes? Aren't they supposed to stop this sort of shit?

The guy standing next to Tommy muffles a sob behind his hand. His knees are shaking like they're going to give out. At least he's smart enough to be quiet about it, not draw attention.

"Let us go!" The guy on Tommy's other side shouts, like a fucking *idiot*.

"Please!" Someone else calls, their voice breaking.

"Hush," Siren's voice sweeps over the crowd, no longer stirring them up into a frenzy. Now he's calming them. His power lays over them all like a blanket, smothering, impossible to resist. "Hush now," Siren croons, "as long as no one tries to be a hero you'll be fine."

"Probably," The Blade murmurs, audible over the dead silence of the crowd.

“Everyone just take a seat,” Siren commands, and they have no choice but to obey.

They huddle close together, strangers, friends, it doesn’t matter. They’re all trapped here, they all only have each other. The guy who’d shouted at the Angel of Death shoves Tommy close to his side. “Stick close kid,” he murmurs, his eyes blazing despite the calm that Siren has forced over them. “I’ll keep you safe.”

“What the fuck do you think you’re gonna do agaisnt *them*?” Tommy asks, incredulous. He scoots a few inches away from the guy. Random people wanting to help him out has never turned out well.

Aside from that one time.

The guy looks a little lost for a second, but he shakes it off, “just stay close.”

Trying to keep himself focused by helping someone else. Well, Tommy doesn’t need help from some idiot who thought it was a good idea to yell at the Angel of Death.

He scoots further away.

Being hostages of the three most dangerous villains in the city--possibly the country, probably the country--is actually pretty boring. They sit around on the floor of the mall and just kind of wait for the villains to do something.

And the villains seem to be waiting for the mayor to do something.

So they’re all just kind of waiting together. Like the world’s most deadly and terrifying waiting room. Only there’s no magazines.

Just bits of rubble.

Some teenagers to Tommy’s left have started a game out of flicking rocks at each other across the ground. Everyone in a five foot radius is silently watching the game because there is *literally* nothing better to do.

Tommy glances up and freezes when he notices that even the Angel of Death is watching, still perched on top of the globe. His face twitches just a tiny bit when the kid closest to him loses a point.

Tommy wonders what he’ll do if that kid loses. What does it mean to have the Angel of Death silently rooting for you in a game of ‘flick the concrete’?

Siren and the Blade’s shadows silently weave through the crowd, keeping watch. The Blade himself is patrolling the edges of the crowd, making sure nobody tries to run.

Its easy to track where they are in the room by the way the quiet murmurs fall to dead silence as they approach. Tommy’s shoulders rise up around his ears as the silence draws nearer and nearer.

The kids stop messing with the concrete, watching with wide, wary eyes. Soft footsteps pace closer and closer. Fuck why couldn't it be one of the shadows? Why'd they have to get Siren himself?

Tommy scoots a little further away from the wanna-be hero guy. He's not getting caught in whatever dumb shit he tries to do.

He nearly bumps into a leg. He can feel the warmth radiating from Siren's skin to his. His heart freezes in his chest. Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck.

He looks up.

Siren is looking down at him.

His eyes are brown, his hair is too, curly, hanging around the edges of his mask. Even with his face covered, Tommy knows those eyes. Knows that hair.

Will looks just as surprised to see him.

And then a shot rings out.

People scream and try to bolt but the Blade's shadows are a frothing fury among them, dragging people back, snapping teeth and flashing their burning eyes.

"Phil!" Will screams, and that's when Tommy sees the Angel of Death fall from his perch. He lands not too far from the concrete-game kids. His wings thrash and his mouth is open in a silent scream.

Oh shit. Oh fuck. Oh holy fucking shit.

Another shot, Tommy ducks reflexively. Covering his head and cowering to the ground.

Idiot hero guy is trying to haul him up, "come on kid, get up! We gotta go!"

Tommy smacks his hands away with a snarl. He's not going anywhere with that idiot. The crowd jostles him, they're scattering like sheep. Trying to find a way out. The Blade's shadows are snapping and sparking, gathering together into a larger form.

Another shot. Another.

"Phil!" Siren-- *Will*-- is shouting, "look at me! Stay awake! We'll get you help, we'll fix it, you'll be alright."

He looks up, and through the rushing crowd, his eyes somehow fall on Tommy.

His heart drops out of his chest. Will is Siren. Will is Siren. Will has always been Siren.

Will knows about him. Siren knows about him.

Siren knows about his powers.

The Angel of Death is lying on the floor of the mall, his green robes stained with red blood.

Tommy takes a step back. Another. Will--Siren--opens his mouth. To say something, to sing, to make Tommy obey. To make Tommy come to him.

Another shot rings out, followed by two more, almost frantic in their pace. There is a roar of rage from the Blade's shadows, there is a deeper, more terrifying one from the Blade himself.

Tommy looks up. The Blade and some hero are on the upper floor, fighting hand to hand. The hero has a gun that he's frantically using to block blows. He stumbles back, into the glass railing.

The Blade bares his teeth and with another bellow of rage, stabs him through the chest.

The railing shatters, raining glass and blood down on the crowd. The hero falls with it. He lands with a *thump* that Tommy feels in his very bones.

He doesn't get up.

Bile gathers at the back of Tommy's throat. The crowd must be screaming, sobbing, Tommy can see someone throwing up. Hands cover mouths, clutch at chests, claw at other people, seeking something nobody can name. Maybe just a reminder that they aren't alone.

The Blade steps through the gap in the railing and lands beside the body of the hero. He grabs the sword still impaled in his chest, bracing his foot on the body and pulling it free. Blood drips from the tip to the floor.

The Blade sweeps through the crowd, like a fucking shark in a school of fish. The crowd swirls around him, desperately trying to stay out of reach of that bloody sword.

Tommy stands frozen as he approaches Siren--Will--and they both go back to the Angel of Death.

He and Siren are speaking frantically, hands pressing over the Angel's wound. The Blade's shadows create a perimeter around them, keeping back any of the crowd stupid or disoriented enough to get near them.

"Come in peacefully," someone says, voice booming over the crowd, "and we'll get him medical care."

Tommy turns and there's a man standing over the body of the hero. Draped in a green cloak, a white mask over his face. There's a staff in his hands, thick wood, capped with metal at the ends, polished to a mirror shine.

The Blade rises, slowly, methodically. He takes up his sword.

"I'll fucking kill you," he growls, "every last one of you."

The hero spins his staff and braces himself. "You can try."

The Blade's shadows seethe and roil around him, overhead the fluorescent lights pop and go out, one by one.

The hero and the Blade lunge for each other. Tommy watches, wide eyed, horrified. He can't take his eyes off of them.

An arm wraps around his chest.

A chill runs down his spine.

"Toms," Will says, his voice quiet, desperate, close. Too close. Tommy turns his head and finds himself nearly nose to nose with Siren.

"Will," Tommy breathes, "don't. Please don't."

"I'm sorry," Will says.

The Blade and the hero spring apart, the Blade is snarling, frustrated. The battle is taking too long, the Angel of Death is still bleeding out on the floor of the mall.

Siren pulls Tommy closer and he hums, quiet, sorrowful, "just relax. It'll be alright."

And Tommy has no choice but to obey.

"Enough!" Siren barks, "Blade." His voice is sharp, commanding, but he's not Singing to them. The heroes have spotted Tommy hanging in Siren's grip now, the hero's hand is clenched tight around the staff. The other two--when did they get here?-- are looking to him, for guidance, for orders.

The hero holds out a hand, warding them back.

The Blade points his sword at them warily as he retreats back to the Angel's crumpled form. He lets it drop as he lifts the Angel into his arms. His shadows gather around him, one of them nudges the Angel's hand almost worriedly.

"Let the kid go," one of the new heroes says, he's..familiar. His voice. He's the fucking idiot from earlier. He takes a step forward.

"Back off!" Will hisses, he pulls Tommy closer and moves closer to the Blade. "We're leaving," he snaps, "the kid's coming with us. If you're good maybe we'll let him come back."

The Idiot growls, but the first guy holds him back with a hand on his shoulder. "*Sapnap*."

Tommy manages a tiny, barely audible whimper. Will hushes him, humming a soothing melody and wrapping him in inescapable layers of calm and peace. His legs drag, refusing to move much less hold him up.

Will makes it to the Blade. Out of the corner of his eye, Tommy can see the Blade's hand land on Will's shoulder. "Ditch the kid," he rumbles, "we've got to go."

For a split second, hope sings in his heart.

“No,” Will says, “he’s coming with us.”

“What?”

“Just do it,” Will snaps.

The shadows rise around them and darkness swallows them whole.

The Blade holds the Angel of Death gently in his arms, the shadows swirl around them. Now that there is no one to fight, they seem calmer, smaller. They keep nudging at the Angel, whispering unintelligible words.

They are in Will’s apartment. Siren’s apartment. Because Will is Siren, and Siren has him held close, has him bound in his song.

The Blade lays the Angel on the counter and rushes into the hall. Probably going for the first aid kit. The same one that Will used to heal his burns, before Tommy healed them for him.

Tommy shudders.

Will’s arm tightens around him, and then releases him. “Stay there,” he murmurs, and Tommy obeys. Will is hovering over the Angel, putting pressure on the wound, trying to speak to him, trying to wake him up.

The Blade’s shadows mill around the room, seeming almost anxious. Some of them wander near him, brush their immaterial sides against his legs like friendly cats.

The Blade returns with the first aid kit. “What’s with the kid?”

“That’s Tommy,” Siren says, Tommy’s heart sinks. Now the Blade will turn to him, his eyes will gleam, greedy, calculating, desperate.

The Angel of Death is dying, and Tommy could save him.

They will make Tommy save him.

He was an idiot to ever believe Will’s promises. To ever trust him.

God they probably knew all along, they’ve been playing with him like a cat with a mouse. Letting him think he was safe, think he was free. But there’s no escaping them, there’s no way to get out of this.

He’s cosigned himself to his worst nightmare. With every sandwich and thermos of cocoa, he’s been building up a debt, and now he’s going to pay. Now he’s got to give them what they’re due.

And he can do nothing but *stay here* and *be calm*. Because that is what Siren has ordered him to do.

“He’s--” Will meets Tommy’s eyes. He looks apologetic, but he looks more desperate. “He’s a healer.”

The Blade freezes, his eyes snap to Tommy and there it is. There is the desperation, there is the undivided focus of a predator and Tommy is nothing but *prey*.

Chapter End Notes

Warnings:

Phil gets shot and Techno stabs a man (yes its Punz)

Hello, did you miss me?

You didn't think it would be all fluff, come on now. <3

Edit 8/2/21

STOP

Before you write a comment about how SBI Did Bad, I am aware. I wrote them doing A Bad on purpose. That is the point of Dumpster Verse. There is no moral paragon here. Nobody is entirely a good or bad guy. They are all going to do bad shit, they will all do good shit. I am tired of comments just talking about how the characters did Bad Thing, if that's all you've got to say, you're reading the wrong story. This is a universe about moral complexity.

I have asked people to refrain from leaving the angry "Character did bad >:(" comments before but I will do so here at the root of the problem as well. If gray morality upsets you and you don't like non-black and white narratives: go. read. something. else. this is not a story for you, you will not enjoy it and i will not enjoy your comments.

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

He searches with a hand and Wilbur takes it in his own. “Its alright,” he murmurs, adding just a little power to the words. “Just stay awake. Stay awake Phil.”

Phil wheezes something that might be a question. “Shh,” Wilbur soothes. Phil’s eyes aren’t focused on him though, he’s looking where they popped into the apartment, where Tommy is standing, swaying without Wilbur there to hold him up.

His eyes wide and glassy and so, so scared. So heartbreakingly scared and worse than the fear is the heartbreak. The betrayal, written clear on his face and deep in his heart.

Chapter Notes

hello, I am back once again to bring you Dumpster 'verse.

Lemme just say that I have been Waiting for So Goddamn Long to drop chapter 8 and y'all's reactions made it So worth it 😊 it was so good. Thank you to everyone who left a comment. And now, more angst

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

They appear back in the apartment and Techno dumps Phil on the counter. Wilbur rushes to his side, putting pressure back on the wound. The hero had good aim, but not perfect. The bullet isn’t in Phil’s heart, but it is in his lungs. He’s struggling to breathe, staring up at Wilbur with wide, confused eyes.

He searches with a hand and Wilbur takes it in his own. “Its alright,” he murmurs, adding just a little power to the words. “Just stay awake. Stay awake Phil.”

Phil wheezes something that might be a question. “Shh,” Wilbur soothes. Phil’s eyes aren’t focused on him though, he’s looking where they popped into the apartment, where Tommy is standing, swaying without Wilbur there to hold him up.

His eyes wide and glassy and so, so scared. So heartbreakingly scared and worse than the fear is the heartbreak. The betrayal, written clear on his face and deep in his heart.

Techno returns with the first aid kit and shoves Wilbur out of the way. “Deal with the kid,” he snaps, “don’t know why you brought him. Should have left him.”

“He’s Tommy,” Wilbur says. “He’s--” he hesitates over the words. But he’s already come this far, he knows what Tommy expects, he knows what he promised he’d never do.

They both know that he’s going to break that promise.

Phil is his dad. Phil saved him, Phil brought him home, Phil *gave* him a home, Phil *is* home.

“He’s a healer,” Wilbur says quietly.

Techno’s head snaps around to Tommy. Tommy flinches and curls in on himself. He manages a step back.

Wilbur cuts in front of Techno as he starts to cross the room to Tommy. “Toms,” he murmurs, “I--”

Tommy is already looking at him with a terrible dull acceptance. Like the fresh wound of Wilbur’s betrayal is already fading, like he’s already making himself come to terms with a terrible fate.

“I’m so sorry,” Wilbur says, his voice breaks, “I’m so sorry Toms, I know what I promised. I *know* and I--I can’t. I can’t keep it.” He lays a hand on Tommy’s shoulder, ignores the flinch that feels more like a blow to his heart. “I’m sorry. He’s my *dad*.”

Tommy won’t meet his eyes. Wilbur lets his power slip away from his mind. Let’s Tommy stand free of his influence. As if that makes this better. As if he is giving him any more choice than he would by making Tommy do this under the power of his song.

Tommy shrugs off his hand and takes a step towards Phil.

The relief nearly makes Wilbur fall to his knees, but he stays on his feet. He has to. Just for a bit longer.

“It’ll take more than once,” Tommy says, his voice quiet and dull. Everything about him seems dull now, lifeless, hollow.

“But you can save him,” Techno says.

“Yes.”

“Do it then.”

Tommy barely flinches at the words, he just reaches out and lays a hand on Phil’s bloodied chest. Phil’s hand reaches up and covers his, there’s a soft, delirious sort of smile on his face.

And then all of the tension drains out of him, his head falls back on the counter. Techno jolts forward, a snarl pulling at his lips but Wilbur intervenes again, “he’s not hurting him,” he says quickly, “its just his power. When he heals it makes you relax.”

It makes Tommy relax too, Will can see him swaying, leaning against the counter. Wilbur lunges forward and catches him when his knees give out.

He holds Tommy close. The wound has stopped bleeding, Phil's breathing doesn't have the terrible gurgling rattle in it anymore. "Thank you," Wilbur whispers into Tommy's hair, "thank you. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm so fucking sorry Tommy."

Tommy is just as woozy as he was after he healed Will, but there is tension through every line of his body. He pushes against Will's chest with an anxious sound.

Techno is looking after Phil, so Wilbur carries Tommy to the couch. "Here," he murmurs, "let's--Let's get you that blanket back. You liked that one huh? All soft and fuzzy?"

Tommy frowns, looking up at him with bleary eyes. Last time he'd been sweet, smiling and soft and warm. He isn't now. He looks tired, but not in a way that any amount of sleep will help.

Wilbur presses their foreheads together. "I'm sorry," he murmurs again.

Tommy turns his face away, into the couch.

Wilbur gets him the blanket anyway. As if that will help.

He wraps it around Tommy's shoulders as gently as he can, but Tommy still whines at him. Confused and scared despite the way his power affects him. He slaps at Wilbur's hands and curls up into the blanket as if it could shelter him.

There are tears slipping down his cheeks. Wilbur longs to brush them away, but he doesn't dare.

"I'm sorry," he whispers.

Tommy doesn't acknowledge him.

"Will," Techno says. "Leave him be."

Wilbur sighs and lets his shoulders slump, nods.

Phil and Tommy are out for a day and a half. Tommy looks set to make it two days, but Phil stirs.

They've moved him from the counter to his bedroom and have been taking turns watching both him and Tommy as they slept. Wilbur is on Phil duty when his eyes open.

He blinks slowly, eyes flitting around the familiar room before they land on Wilbur and he relaxes. "Hey," he murmurs, his voice is raspy and low, but god is it good to hear it.

Its good to hear anything and not be left in the silence with his thoughts, but its especially good to hear Phil's voice.

“Hey yourself,” Wilbur says, reaching over to grab the glass of water Techno left at Phil’s bedside. He holds it out to Phil, straw nearly poking his lips, “you got hurt,” he says, “Techno says you’re not in danger of dying anymore but take it easy all the same.”

Phil frowns, taking a few sips of water before he leans away again. “We were at the mall, there was a shot. Who...?”

“Some hero,” Wilbur sneers, “one of those crack-shot types. Techno handled him.”

Phil nods, his hand searching his body for the wound. He winces when he comes to what is probably a tender spot on his chest. “How long have I been out?”

“A day and a half ish. Give or take a few hours.”

Phil frowns.

“We-- There was a healer,” Wilbur says, his hands clench together in his lap. He can’t bring himself to look at Phil. “he fixed you up.”

“Nice of him,” Phil says in a way that means he wants Will to expand on that.

“Yeah,” Wilbur says. “He’s a good kid. I--He--” Wilbur sighs, collapsing in on himself. “Its Tommy, Tommy’s the healer. He was in the crowd and I just. You were hurt, and he was there and-- I messed up, dad.” He swallows hard.

“Oh Will,” Phil murmurs, reaching a hand out to him. “It sounds like it wasn’t a great situation. Did you Sing him?”

“No,” Wilbur says, taking his hand and holding it tight, but not too tight. Just enough to ground himself. “I did to get him here but he healed you on his own. I thought it might be-- I don’t know. I didn’t want to *make* him, but he just. He just *gave up*.”

Tommy, unstoppable, scrappy, Tommy, had just given up. Had looked at Will with his wild blue eyes, dull and resigned and done what Will had asked of him.

Phil makes a sympathetic noise in the back of his throat, his thumb stroking over Will’s knuckles. “Well, I won’t say you shouldn’t have asked him to heal me, cause I do quite like being alive.”

Will laughs, more a puff of breath than a true laugh, but the thought was there. Phil smiles all the same.

“It was a bad situation,” Phil repeats, “and there were only bad choices. He didn’t know you were Siren but I’m betting he recognized you.”

Will nods miserably, remembering the shock, the naked, bone deep *fear*, the heartbreaking betrayal in Tommy’s eyes when they met across the crowd.

“And I was hurt, and I’m betting there were other heroes showing up.”

“Dream,” Wilbur tells him, “and his dumb little squad.”

Phil snorts derisively, then winces when that proves too much for his still-healing wound.
“Bastard.”

“Yeah.”

“So I was hurt, Tommy was already scared, you had heroes closing in. You did what you had to do. It was shitty, I imagine that you’ve lost a lot of trust with Tommy.”

“All of it,” Will corrects him softly. “He--healing takes a lot out of him. I burnt myself when he was over here that one weekend--just some hot water, it would have been fine with some burn cream, I see that Dad Look on your face--and he healed me. He was kind of hazy and loopy for a bit after and then he fell asleep from evening til after sunrise next morning.”

Phil nods, following along with the story.

“That time he was, god he was so cute. You remember the picture I sent you. He wasn’t scared, he was all cuddly and sweet.” The memories are bitter now, he’s not going to have that with Tommy again.

“He was just scared this time. He would have run if he could but he was just too worn out. Techno’s watching him now, he’s on the couch. Even in his sleep he doesn’t--If he hears me he looks--” Wilbur puts his head in his hands, scrubbing his palms down his cheeks. He isn’t crying, but god does he kind of want to.

“I’m sorry,” Phil says, “I know you care about him.”

“I wanted to help him,” Wilbur confesses in a whisper, “the way you did me. But this...I promised him I’d never ask him to heal for me, but what could I do?”

Phil levers himself up onto his elbows.

“Phil!” Wilbur scolds, trying to push him back down. Phil just wraps an arm around his shoulders.

“We’ll figure it out.” Phil says, “we’ll do our best Will.”

He doesn’t promise more than that, Phil’s always been a realist.

Their best.

He hopes its good enough, but how can it be when Tommy’s seen them at their worst?

The thing about Tommy's trauma response (in dumpster verse especially) is that he's all fight and flight until he knows the situation is hopeless, and then he goes straight to Fawn response 😞

Also everyone was like "Phil will fix this, Phil will yell at Wilbur!" your faith in dadza is sweet, but fam he's a supervillain and he's got his own issues in this AU. He's doing his best but he's not gonna yell at Will for saving his life. Wait til his backstory hits, its going to wreck you. Techno's too.

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

The door down the hall opens again.

“Hey Toms,” Siren says, “Phil wants to meet you, if you feel up for it. Its okay if you don’t want to he’s just--”

Tommy stands. He feels dizzy and shaky--the Angel’s wound was bigger than he’s healed in awhile. He’s not used to feeling like this any more. But he’s certainly not going to make the Angel wait.

“Okay,” Siren says, “well, uh. Follow me.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“You should eat something,” The Blade says, holding out a smushed looking protein bar.

Tommy looks at it warily. Its sealed, and its not like they need to drug him to get him to do what they want. Even without Siren’s powers the Blade is fully capable of kicking his ass.

The Angel of Death is awake now too and even with that injury he could beat Tommy in a fight. He could kill Tommy without even *needing* to fight.

All it would take is a touch.

“Look you don’t have to take it,” the Blade says, “but I figured you’d be hungry and you definitely don’t want me cooking for you.”

His lips twitch, like he’s making a joke. But he’s the fucking *Blade*, Tommy isn’t laughing at him or with him or *near* him.

The Blade sighs and drops the protein bar on the coffee table in front of Tommy. Tommy flinches at the sound.

The Blade hums thoughtfully and Tommy hunches further in on himself. He’s still wrapped in the soft blanket that Will brought him. The bar sits on the worn wood, taunting. Everything is another little debt, adding onto his time, his burden.

For now its just healing the Angel, but after that who knows. When they don’t have one of their own in need of healing who knows how they’ll treat him. He’ll be less valuable, less necessary. Maybe they’ll rent out his powers, maybe they’ll just keep him locked up until they need him again.

They don't get injured often, Tommy thinks. You don't hear about it at least. How often will they need a healer? How valuable will he be to them?

The door at the end of the hall clicks softly shut and the familiar cadence of Will's steps comes towards them. He hovers beside the Blade, they're speaking in whispers that Tommy doesn't bother trying to hear.

As much as he wants to know, he also doesn't.

"Hey Toms," Will says--is that even his real name? The Blade has called him that though. Why would he have offered his real name to some dumb street kid? Unless they always knew about Tommy's powers.

There are people who know about him, people he also owes debts to, people he thought he'd escaped. Maybe they'd traded information about him to Will, to help him set his trap.

"Are you hungry?" Will--probably better to just call him Siren--asks.

Tommy shrugs. He is, but he doesn't know what it'll cost him.

"You should eat," Siren says. "I could make you something if you wanted."

Tommy shakes his head. Its risky, on the one hand he's denying favor. That never turns out well. People in charge always want you to be grateful for what they give you, no matter what it is.

He's pretty sure he'd get in more trouble if he threw up Siren's food though.

Siren doesn't get angry though, he only says, "okay Toms." and wanders back down the hall again.

The Blade stays where he is, looming over Tommy. He can feel the weight of his gaze on the back of his neck.

Finally, just when Tommy is about to ask if he's supposed to be *doing* something, the Blade sighs and turns away.

The door down the hall opens again.

"Hey Toms," Siren says, "Phil wants to meet you, if you feel up for it. Its okay if you don't want to he's just--"

Tommy stands. He feels dizzy and shaky--the Angel's wound was bigger than he's healed in awhile. He's not used to feeling like this any more. But he's certainly not going to make the Angel wait.

"Okay," Siren says, "well, uh. Follow me."

Tommy obeys. He keeps the blanket around his shoulders even though he's not really cold. He keeps his eyes on the ground, shuffling behind Siren as best he can. He's dizzy, and tired,

and he just wants to go curl up somewhere that nobody will find him again.

Part of him wants one of Siren's sandwiches, wants the warm sweetness of hot cocoa, Siren's familiar company.

He tells that part of himself to shut the fuck up.

The Angel's room is dimly lit, his bed piled high with pillows and blankets. Its clearly set up for two, the angel is laying on the side further from the door. There's a chair beside him, where Siren and the Blade have been keeping watch over him.

The Angel looks small, lying in the bed. His wings are folded instead of spread wide. He looks tired, almost as tired as Tommy feels. An injury like his takes a lot out of you, even if you've got the benefits of a healer.

"Hey mate," the Angel says, his voice a soft rasp. Not the darkly mischievous confidence that he'd had before. Perched atop the world, looking down at them all.

"Hello," Tommy says, keeping his eyes down, his shoulders hunched.

Siren steps past him to sit beside the Angel, helping him adjust the pillows so he can sit up. Siren's hands are gentle, the Angel might be his boss, but he's also more. This isn't just a subordinate looking after their superior. This is a son looking after his father.

Tommy doesn't dare look into the Angel's face.

"Will's told me a lot about you," the Angel says, "I was looking forward to meeting you. Maybe not like this," he laughs, a soft sound, but his breath still hitches, pained by it. "But things never quite work out like we think they will, do they?"

Tommy silently shakes his head. Fuck that makes the world spin a bit more. He bites the inside of his lip to try and ground himself.

"I know you're upset," the Angel says, "and probably scared."

'*Probably scared*,' he says. Tommy bites down a hysterical laugh. No, he's not scared. Not scared at all. What is there to be scared of? Just the three most dangerous villains in the city. Just everything he thought he'd finally outrun, the life he thought he'd left behind.

"I'm sorry it turned out like this," the Angel says.

Tommy wonders how it was supposed to go. Were they planning on trying to lure him in more willingly? How much longer would Siren have tried to tame him with gentle words and warm food?

"We aren't going to hurt you," the Angel says.

"*As long as you behave*," Tommy finishes for him in his mind.

“You don’t have to stay here, after I’m fixed up, if you’d prefer we have some friends in the city that you can go to instead. I really rather you didn’t go back to the streets though mate.”

Tommy holds back a shudder. He pulls the blanket tighter over his shoulders, but the chill has nothing to do with the temperature. They’re not letting him go. He knew they wouldn’t.

Who are these ‘friends’ though? More villains, obviously. Tommy wonders what they’ll be like. Are they underlings? Or allies?

“Mate,” the Angel says, “come here.”

Tommy’s eyes dart up to his face before he can stop them. He looks--worried, but that doesn’t really make sense.

“You look dead on your feet, come sit down.” The Angel pats the bed.

Tommy doesn’t dare argue. He slowly inches his way closer. Closer than he wants to be to the Angel of Death. Closer than just about anyone’s been.

Anyone still alive at least.

Aside from the Blade and Siren that is.

His hands shake. He twists them into the blanket and gingerly sits on the furthest corner of the bed.

“There you go,” the Angel says warmly, “that’s better. Will says that healing takes a lot out of you.”

Tommy swallows, “yes sir.” His voice is barely audible. Here it comes, the questions about his abilities. About his limits.

How much do they know? Is it better to just tell the truth? Or try to lie?

“Thank you for healing me,” the Angel says, “I know it exactly willing, but thank you all the same.”

Tommy ducks his head. Hoping that its a vague enough gesture that it can be either gratitude for the praise or submission. He’s not sure which one the Angel wants.

He studies the blanket wrapped around his hands. There’s a repeating pattern of little cartoon pig faces. Not really what you’d expect from a supervillain but Tommy’s certainly not going to laugh at them.

“Tommy,” the Angel says.

Fuck is it terrifying to hear his name come from the Angel of Death’s lips.

“Could you look at me?” The Angel asks.

Tommy obeys, turning his head and fixing his eyes on the Angel's chin.

He ducks his head, dipping his eyes into Tommy's view. His smile is soft and hesitant, "there you are," he says. "Hi. You hearing me mate?"

Tommy nods, his heart feels like its crawling up his throat. Like its going to force itself out of his mouth and run and leave the rest of him behind. As if that would protect it.

Its terrifying, being the singular focus of the Angel of Death. Its more so when he's being...Weird. Soft and gentle. Tommy doesn't know why he's doing that, why he's talking so kindly. It can't be anything good. This feels like the calm before the storm, the bait in the trap.

"Yeah?" the Angel asks, "you seem a little out of it. That's okay. You're probably still tired."

Tommy has no idea what sort of response he wants. He wants to look away from the Angel, from the concern that is painting lines onto his face. But the Angel told him to look at him, and Tommy isn't going to do anything to break this strange spell if he can.

The Angel tries to lean forward but Siren catches him by the shoulder, "Phil," he says, almost warningly. "Don't strain yourself."

"I'm fine mate," the Angel says, "you and Techno can both quit hovering."

"No we can't," Siren says. "You'll decide you're better and try to go for a flight."

"That was once," the Angel mutters.

"One time too many, you get to be babysat, deal with it."

The Angel sighs and leans back against the pillows again. "Fine, fine."

"Like you're not just like this when we're hurt," Siren snorts.

The Angel rolls his eyes, and then his attention falls back on Tommy. Like the Blade's gaze, it is a palpable weight. A dangerous weight. Tommy feels like he's going to be crushed under it.

"Why don't you lay down mate, you look exhausted. That couch is alright for naps but its a bit hard on you if you spend too long on it. Here," he takes a few pillows from his stack and lightly tosses one up onto the headboard beside him. Another one is settled by his hip, creating a pathetic barrier. "There's room for both of us, come get some sleep."

Laying down beside the Angel of Death is the *last* fucking thing Tommy wants to do. *Sleeping* next to him sounds insane, impossible, but he's not exactly in a position to argue.

So he obeys.

He crawls up the mattress and forces his body to lay down. He can't make himself relax. The Angel of Death tosses the blanket over him gently.

“There you go,” he says, still in that strange gentle mood. Tommy wonders how long it will last. Perhaps this is the Angel’s gratitude, Tommy saved his life and now like a favored pet he’s being allowed up on the furniture. “Get some rest,” the Angel commands, “we can talk more later.”

Tommy does his best to obey. He curls his knees up to his chest, his hands curled under his chin. Siren and the Angel speak softly beside him, but Tommy does his best not to register the words. To let them flow over him, become senseless noise. He doesn’t want to know. He doesn’t need to know.

Somehow, their soft tones become gentle, and somehow, Tommy’s eyes slip closed. He doesn’t realize the moment he falls asleep.

Chapter End Notes

Phil power reveal! mans got Death Hands :D (and wings but you know, whatever)

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

“You let him walk out of here,” Techno says, his eyes unwavering as they meet Wilbur’s, “that’s the last time you see him. As soon as he thinks he can, he’ll bolt and he’ll run so far none of us will see him again. I didn’t think you’d be so eager for that.” He isn’t. He doesn’t want Tommy to leave, doesn’t want to lose him to the streets. But--“I deserve it,” Wilbur says quietly, “he should run. I promised him--”

Chapter Notes

Technoblade finally gets a bit more screen time!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“He’s staying,” Techno says, unmoved, “until Phil is healed. Puffy is still out of town.”

“Techno,” Wilbur growls, “we’re not forcing him to stay here and heal Phil! This is bad enough as it is.”

“You let him walk out of here,” Techno says, his eyes unwavering as they meet Wilbur’s, “that’s the last time you see him. As soon as he thinks he can, he’ll bolt and he’ll run so far none of us will see him again. I didn’t think you’d be so eager for that.”

He isn’t. He doesn’t want Tommy to leave, doesn’t want to lose him to the streets. But--“I deserve it,” Wilbur says quietly, “he should run. I promised him--”

“Well you shouldn’t have,” Techno says flatly, “don’t make promises you can’t keep. And quit that martyr shit. Phil was dying, healing him didn’t kill the kid. We’re not hurting him, we’re not chaining him to the radiator or anything. We’re offering a warm place to sleep and as much food as he can eat without throwing up. He’s a street kid, he’ll love it.”

“You don’t get it,” Wilbur growls.

“Well then explain it to me,” Techno snaps, “all I know is that we hauled your street kid back here and now everything between you two is shit.”

Wilbur sits heavily on the couch, “Tommy’s a healer.”

“I did gather that much, thanks.”

“When I first found out he ran, and he was gone for a week. He’s paranoid about it. I think someone--you know.”

Techno hums, sitting on the couch beside them, so close their shoulders brush. “Streets are dangerous for a healer as powerful as him.”

There’s a reason that Puffy sticks around with them, and with Niki. Healers are valuable, and unless they’ve got some way or someone to protect them, they’re vulnerable.

“He didn’t know I was Siren, before I saw him at the mall. And then I just. Snatched him up and brought him here and made him heal Phil. He probably thinks that he’s *ours* now.”

Techno nods slowly, “well that’s shit.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

Wilbur growls and runs a hand through his hair, “you’re an ass.”

“I don’t see why you don’t just sit the kid down and *tell* him that we’re not keeping him as some fucked up healer-pet or whatever.”

“He’s not going to believe me.”

“Tell him anyway, and keep telling him til he does.”

“The flaw with this plan is that you intend to make him stay and heal Phil, Technoblade.”

“I’m not letting Phil die so you can keep trying to lure in your street kid the nice way. He’s already here, just make him want to stay.”

“Its not as simple as you’re making it sound.”

“Its not as difficult as *you’re* making it sound. Between the two of us we might get somewhere.”

“You’re an ass.”

“Yeah, I’m a supervillain, I dunno if you’ve been paying attention or not but I kill people.”

Wilbur sighs. “You’re impossible sometimes.”

“So are you. Go get the kid some bribes to stick around and quit moping.”

“Bribes aren’t going to work, Techno.”

“Get some food while you’re out too. Neither of us wants me to cook and you’re a disaster in the kitchen.” Techno shoves him unceremoniously off the couch, “go, I’ll babysit.”

“I hate you,” Wilbur says, pulling his coat off the hook.

“Mhm, get stuff from that thai place would you?”

“No, I’m getting pizza just to spite you.”

“Cool, I like pizza too.”

Wilbur shuts the door behind himself with a bit more force than strictly necessary.

He shoves his hands into his pockets and walks out of the building. The air outside is cold, there are heavy clouds hanging overhead. There’ll be snow tonight he imagines.

For once, Tommy won’t be out in it.

He’s safe and warm in the apartment. But he’s terrified, and thinks he’s their prisoner.

Wilbur is a fucking supervillain, when did he get caught up in all these moral dilemmas?

The fact remains that Tommy *does* need some things of his own if he’s going to stay with them for any length of time, much less the length that Wilbur wishes he would. He doubts that Tommy would want to borrow his clothes again, and Techno’s would swamp him.

So that’s a pretty easy first stop. He peruses the aisles, looking for things that will fit Tommy’s long bony body. He gets things with adjustable waists and space to grow into in the hope that Tommy will put more weight on in the future.

Everything leans towards thick and soft fabrics, Tommy’s been hauling Techno’s blanket around almost religiously. A plush robe is thrown into the pile with satisfaction and he continues his search.

He nearly walks past the toy aisle. Tommy’s not a little kid, but maybe he deserves the chance to have a little bit of childhood back.

He picks up a stuffed cow off the shelf, remembering Tommy’s enthusiastic insistence that they were the best animal over warm cocoa and sandwiches.

He stops in the housewares section, touching the different blankets on display. Looking for the perfect one. Techno’s going to want his back at some point.

A bit of candy goes in as well, candy never hurt.

He smiles politely at the cashier while she rings up his selection and then Sings her into voiding the sale, printing the receipt, and forgetting she ever saw him. He walks past the greeter with full bags and a receipt in hand but his wallet no lighter.

He wishes he knew Tommy’s favorite food, so that he could get that. But Tommy’s a street kid, and this is fresh, warm food, he’ll eat it.

He texts Techno to help him carry everything back up and studiously ignores the raised eyebrow at the amount of stuff he’d brought back for Tommy. Its not excessive, its *reasonable*.

Tommy has nothing, not even his own things--probably still in his hideout, wherever that is. If they haven't been stolen yet.

They enter the apartment quietly, both Phil and Tommy are still asleep, but Wilbur expects the smell of food will wake them both up pretty quickly.

Sure enough, almost as soon as he's finished setting down his bags, Phil's voice comes drifting out of the bedroom, "you better not have put fucking pineapple on that pizza."

Wilbur snickers, "and if I did? What are you gonna do about it old man?"

"Techno, avenge me!"

"I *like* pineapple on my pizza," Techno grumbles, assembling plates for both him and Phil.

"Avenge me anyway."

"There's no pineapple on it, you don't need to be avenged."

"Tommy?" Wilbur calls hopefully, "You want to come get a plate? Or I can make you one if you want, I just don't know what you prefer."

Tommy doesn't answer, but he does come shuffling cautiously out of Phil's room. He looks like a mouse walking into a room full of cats. His eyes are glued to the floor, his shoulders hunched, Techno's blanket dragging behind him like a cape.

He freezes when the shopping bags enter his line of sight.

"I, uh, picked up some stuff for you," Wilbur says, "might have gone a bit overboard but well, it didn't really cost me anything." He laughs and it sounds nervous even to his own ears.

Tommy's breath hitches, he's still staring at the bags.

"You don't owe me anything for it," Wilbur says, taking a careful step closer. "I wanted to get it for you. It's not a trap or a debt."

Tommy huddles in on himself, his fist curled tightly in Techno's blanket. He doesn't say anything and Wilbur can't see his face from his angle.

"Toms?"

"Get some food kid," Techno cuts in.

Tommy flinches, his breath is coming a bit faster, but he's still silent as the grave.

"You haven't eaten all day," Techno says, "its food, its already here, eat it."

Tommy's next breath is shuddery and a bit louder. "Yes sir."

Techno makes a low, disapproving sound and Wilbur can see Tommy freeze up entirely.

“Techno--”

“Nope. Here,” Techno shoves Phil’s plate into Wilbur’s hands. “You go, Tommy and I are going to talk.”

“ *Techno*, ” Wilbur says again.

“I don’t recall telling you to argue, brat. Go.”

Techno meets his eyes and he’s got that stupid too-calm “I will not be swayed” expression on his face. Fuck. Wilbur’s hated that look as long as he’s known Techno.

“Fine.” He snatches the plate and heads towards Phil’s room. He pauses by Tommy’s side, “hey, he won’t--”

“ *Go* , Wilbur.”

Wilbur goes.

Chapter End Notes

don't worry Techno won't hurt him he's just going to Talk with Tommy

Everyone in the comments is so sure that SBI is going to be better than they are. Guys. These are Super Villains, and they all have their own weird hangups and blindspots and flaws. Everyone in Dumpster 'verse is Flawed, and they are going to make Flawed decisions. They're all a bunch of idiots playing the hand they've been dealt, but they're really bad at cards.

Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

The Blade sighs, pinching the bridge of his nose, “sit down kid, come on, I’m not going to hurt you we just need to have a talk. And apparently Wilbur is incapable of doing this one.” He shakes his head, “never thought that kid would be unable to talk.”

Chapter Notes

If I've learned one thing from the comments its that you motherfuckers have no faith in Techno and no faith in me. Come on fam, how many times have I delivered your Soft Content? Trust a little, I fulfill my promises. I have 70k words written for this AU, it can't all be angst, this is me we're talking about.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The Blade sets his plate aside. The stupid fucking pizza that is the cause of all this. He’s going to get his first punishment from The Blade over fucking pizza.

Words crowd at his lips, pleas for mercy, promises to be better in the future. He’ll eat. He’ll eat if they want him to. He will. He’ll be grateful.

“I can heal better if I’m not hurt,” he wants to say, the Angel still has a lot of healing to do. Surely this punishment can wait. He’ll do anything to put it off for as long as possible.

The Blade sits down on the couch. “My name is Techno,” he says, “I’m not a ‘sir,’ kid.”

“Yes s--Techno. Yes Techno.” Fuck how the hell was he supposed to know that he didn’t want to be called Sir?

Schlatt always did.

“Amazin’, you managed to make my own name sound like sir.”

Tommy flinches, there’s just no winning with this fucker, is there?

One of the shadows on the wall blinks at him. He can see a few more moving out of the corner of his eye. He edges away from the shadow of the couch at his feet. It follows him.

“Please,” he manages to whisper.

“Leave him be,” the Blade commands, “he’s spooked enough as it is without you guys, go on.” he waves a hand and the shadows retreat back to their natural shapes. “Sorry, they like you.”

What? Why the *fuck* would the Blade’s shadows like him? What does it even *mean* for them to like him? Do they want to eat him? Something worse?

The Blade sighs, pinching the bridge of his nose, “sit down kid, come on, I’m not going to hurt you we just need to have a talk. And apparently Wilbur is incapable of doing this one.” He shakes his head, “never thought that kid would be unable to talk.”

Tommy slowly lowers himself to the edge of the armchair beside the couch. Its clearly made to accommodate wings and he’s terrified that its some sort of fucking *throne* thing that only the Angel can sit on. But he’s also terrified to sit beside the Blade.

“You aren’t our prisoner,” the Blade says, short, blunt, and utterly confusing. “Yeah, we need you to stick around til Phil’s better but after that you don’t have to stay here. This isn’t some--” the Blade waves a hand through the air, “--thing where we’re keeping you for free healthcare, kid. We’ve got someone for that.”

The words are plain english, but they don’t make a bit of sense.

“And she works for us *willingly*,” the Blade says, like that is what needed to be clarified. “Gets paid and everything. She’s just out of town at the minute.”

A tiny, strangled questioning noise wrestles its way out of his throat.

“You’re here because Wilbur cares about you,” the Blade says, “he wanted to help you. Shit kind of hit the fan on that front and things to a little FUBAR but you’re not our prisoner, you’re not our property, you’re a friend. Family, if Wilbur gets his way.”

“I--”

The Blade looks at him, nods promptly.

“I don’t--” his voice is shaky, his hands are too. “You can’t--”

Mean that, be serious, do this. He doesn’t know what he means to say. He doesn’t know anything, any more.

He can’t believe this, he can’t afford to. This--

It doesn’t make sense.

He curls in on himself. A frail sound rises out of his chest, something scared and confused and begging. For what he doesn’t know. For the Blade to give up this weird mind game and just beat him? For it to not be a game, for it to be true.

For someone to want him, for there not to be pain and fear.

“Easy,” the Blade murmurs, “you’re safe, Tommy.”

He isn’t, he can’t be.

It doesn’t make sense.

“You’re lying.”

“I’m not.”

“Yes you are,” he wants to shut up, but the words keep coming, spilling past his lips. “You’re lying, you’re trying to trick me, you can’t-- this isn’t how it *works*.”

He sounds like a child. He feels like a child, lost for the first time in the city, not yet learned in the ways of the streets. Desperately hoping for someone to take his hand and guide him through the confusion and fear.

“It is here,” the Blade says. “It works like that here.”

Tommy shakes his head desperately. “No.”

“Yes,” the Blade says simply. “You’re under my protection now, kid. Under all of ours. Nobody is going to hurt you, nobody owns you, if anyone tries then they’ll deal with *us*.”

The shadows’ eyes gleam.

One of them breaks away and slinks across the room, wolfish and vague, to the Blade’s side. It nudges at his hand and whispers in an unintelligible tongue.

“Give him a minute,” the Blade says, stroking its head, “I’m turning his whole world upside down.”

Tommy makes a high, wavering sound that’s probably closer to a sob than anything else.

“You aren’t our prisoner,” the Blade says, like if he repeats it enough it will start making sense, “we aren’t going to hurt you.”

Its not working, if that’s what he’s trying to do. Its just making Tommy more confused.

“No.”

“Yes,” the Blade says, patient, in the way of someone who knows that they are going to get what they want.

But Tommy doesn’t know *what he wants*. What is the *point* of this?

Tommy cradles his head in his hands. There is a creak of springs from the couch and then the Blade is kneeling in front of him. “Its alright,” he murmurs, “I know its confusing, you’ve been taught one thing all your life and here I am doing the opposite.”

Tommy can’t help but nod.

The Blade's hands land on his shoulders. But he doesn't restrain him, doesn't shake him til his teeth rattle. Instead he gently rubs his hands up and down Tommy's arms.

"You don't have to believe my words," he says, "we'll show you. You'll see. You're safe here. You don't owe us anything. We want to help you."

Chapter End Notes

Surprise bitches Dream wasn't the big bad it was Schlatt.

Also, today you get a special treat: double upload because the next chapter is literally just filler. I didn't have anything to do in Wilbur's POV but I wanted to keep the pattern and I'd feel bad making you guys wait a whole day just to get filler, and both these chapters are p short. Not that you guys are gonna complain about double upload lmao

Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

Filler Chapter Rip ((Part of a double upload)))

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

There is one of Techno's shadows draped over Phil's legs. There are actually dozens of Techno's shadows in the room, which is why it looks so dark despite the lights being on. But this one has chosen to be closer to physical.

"Where's Techno and Tommy?" Phil asks, taking his plate as Wilbur sits down.

"Talking," Will says uneasily.

Phil hums, "probably a good thing," he says, "Techno'll get through to him."

"He's going to terrify him," Wilbur argues.

"Mate, *all* of us terrify him," Phil says sympathetically.

Wilbur sighs and takes a morose bite of pizza. "Yeah."

"Techno knows what he's doing," Phil says, "he'll at least get the kid thinking."

"About how he's going to kill him," Wilbur snorts.

"At first probably," Phil agrees. "But after that."

Wilbur hopes he's right. The shadow over Phil's lap lifts its head, listening in on what's going on in the living room better than they can. It doesn't go rushing out there, so Wilbur assumes that there's no murder going on.

Eventually, the shadow lays its head back down.

A moment later, footsteps approach the room. Techno guides Tommy through the door by his shoulder, his hand is gentle, not restraining. Tommy looks exhausted again, his eyes glassy and red rimmed. There are tear tracks drying on his cheeks.

He's holding a plate of pizza, but Wilbur's pretty sure he's not smelling it. Or even registering its presence.

"Toms?"

“Leave him be,” Techno says, “he’s had a rough time. Let him eat and get some sleep.”

Some of Techno’s shadows are lingering in Tommy’s. Their eyes peer up at Wilbur from the floor. Techno guides Tommy to sit on the edge of the bed, “eat, kid.”

Tommy mechanically lifts the pizza to his mouth.

Wilbur can’t help but watch as the food disappears. Even as exhausted as he seems--he’s swaying where he sits, and every time he blinks it seems to take more effort for him to open his eyes again--Tommy eats fast. He takes big bites, holds the food close to his chest like someone is going to take it away.

It doesn’t take long for him to empty his plate but even then he holds it close.

“You done kid?” Techno asks, he reaches out a hand for it, but Tommy leans away, pulling the plate closer. “Alright,” Techno says, giving up on taking it without much fuss. “Why don’t you lay down and go back to sleep, you can have more pizza when you wake up.”

The three of them eat their pizza quietly, pretending that they’re not keeping an eye on Tommy. He’s slowly listing to the side, tipping closer and closer to falling over with the plate still clutched in his hands.

Finally he gives in, slumping down onto the pillows. The plate is curled in his arms like a child with a beloved toy. Wilbur quietly sets his own plate aside and sneaks out to the livingroom to grab the cow from the bags. He slips it carefully into Tommy’s arms to replace the plate. He snuggles into the plush fur with a murmur.

Wilbur stacks Tommy’s plate underneath his and dares to reach out and brush a strand of Tommy’s hair out of his face. He’s certain that Tommy will somehow know, even unconscious, that Wilbur is the one touching him. That he’ll cower away from the hand. He doesn’t. He just keeps sleeping peacefully.

“How’d the talk go?”

“He doesn’t really believe me yet,” Techno says, “but the idea’s in his head now. He’s a smart kid, with enough evidence he’ll put the pieces together.”

Wilbur sighs and finishes his pizza, handing the crusts over to Phil because for some reason he *likes* literally the most boring part of the pizza. They sit together quietly, Phil’s on his laptop, and Techno on his phone, but Wilbur can’t find anything that will hold his attention.

His eyes keep drifting back to Tommy. He’s sleeping deeply, exhausted in the way that only high emotions can manage. His nose is buried in the fur of the cow, it makes him look younger. With his hollow cheeks hidden and his blond curls falling softly over his face.

Techno makes a disgusted noise from his chair.

“Hm?” Phil inquires.

“The news,” Techno growls, “some tribute to that idiot hero. They’re speculating that he managed to kill you.” There is a darkness in his voice that would send anybody but one of them running for the hills. The shadows shift around them, watching Techno eagerly, waiting.

“We’ll show them,” Phil says, gently taking Techno’s hand in his own, “together, in a few days, once I’m back on my feet.”

“A *week*, old man. At *least*. Not a few days.”

Phil sighs, “such a mother hen.”

“I am not.”

Phil hums doubtfully.

“He almost killed you,” Techno grumbles. “Now they’ll be trying more. This is blood in the water.”

“We’ll show them,” Phil says again, “they’ll forget about this pretty quick once we come back. We’ll do something big, remind them why we’re not to be messed with. Let them have their victory for a few days, let them get hopeful.” His smile is dark, all *Angel of Death* and most people would assume that means there’s no *Phil* in it, but Wilbur knows better. “Then we crush them.”

“Then we crush them,” Techno agrees. “As soon as you’re cleared.”

“As soon as I’m cleared,” Phil rolls his eyes. “You want to watch a movie in the meantime?”

“Sure,” Techno sighs, “got nothin’ better to do.”

They huddle around Phil’s laptop, Wilbur’s shoulder pressed to Phil’s, Phil’s wing wrapped around him. He rests his temple against Phil’s, “I was worried about you,” he confesses in a murmur.

“I know mate,” Phil replies, just as quiet, his hand finds Wilbur’s. “I’m going to be alright though, thanks to you, and Tommy.”

Wilbur glances at Tommy, still sleeping peacefully on his half of the bed. Distant from them, for now, but hopefully, *hopefully*, he will stay. He will come closer, be one of them. A part of their family.

When Tommy wakes up he’s still quiet and wary, but there’s something more going on behind his eyes now. A question that he hasn’t asked but they’re answering all the same.

Everything they do is carefully observed, catalogued. Wilbur tries not to get his hopes up too much. Tommy is a street kid, and he’s paranoid on top of that.

Either he believed Techno and he's giving them a chance, or he's waiting for them to lower their guard enough for him to run. He hasn't tried yet, Wilbur hasn't even seen him gathering food or supplies for an escape, but with how particular he is about owing people he might not try to take anything from them. Like they'd hunt him down over some protein bars and clothes.

Wilbur wants to know who did this to him. Who made him this scared, who beat these lessons into him.

He's going to tear them apart.

Chapter End Notes

Is Wilbur projecting his anger at himself on other people? Yes, yes he is. Is that a good idea that will promote healthy communication and relationships? No, no it isn't. Is there anyone good enough at emotions and relationships to help with that? No, no there isn't.

Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

So when the fourth day dawns, he stands before the Blade and says, "I can heal again."

The Blade looks up from his phone. "Hm?"

"He's still not fully healed," Tommy says, motioning to the Angel's room, "I've rested enough, I can use my power again."

He's surprised that they haven't made him do it before now. Schlatt never wasted time like this.

The Blade sets his phone aside and folds his hands together, studying Tommy quietly.

Tommy holds still, keeping his eyes fixed on the wall behind the Blade's ear. They don't like him to look down, but he's still not looking them in the eyes.

He forces his breathing to stay steady and even as he waits for the Blade's judgement.

Chapter Notes

Alright guys, I love hearing from y'all, I love comments, especially long comments but let's be a little more chill down there yeah?

I get that y'all are frustrated with SBI but the whole point of this series is that nobody is completely good or completely bad. SBI are doing their best but their best is clumsy and imperfect, and they are going to fuck up, but in the end everything will work out to one degree or another. Its not going to be perfect, its not going to be graceful, but they'll figure something out. Nobody's gonna die, there's gonna be a happy ending, just like always.

Love y'all <3 but chill a bit

They're weird. All three of them.

For people who are known for being bloodthirsty and merciless they're...nice. Kind. *Gentle*. Which is not a word that Tommy figured would ever apply to a man he saw literally *straight up murder* a hero.

They still watch him though.

The Blade and his shadows are ubiquitous around the apartment. Tommy can't go anywhere without the shadows sprouting burning eyes and watching him.

Even *his* shadow, sometimes. Which was fucking *terrifying*.

The Blade (he's told Tommy that he can call him Techno but Tommy is *not doing that*, thanks) shoos them away whenever he notices. "Sorry," he says gruffly, "they're worried, they hover."

Tommy's heard about what those shadows can fucking do. He didn't know they could be *worried*. He has no fucking clue why they'd be worried about *him*.

He figures it's about the Angel. He's the one healing the guy, who the Blade clearly cares a lot about. You keep an eye on your valuables, Tommy's familiar with being supervised.

Just not by his own fucking shadow.

Aside from the constant supervision from the shadows, the supervillains are weirdly...Domestic.

Siren and the Blade rotate sitting by the Angel's side. Tommy can hear them talking and laughing in there together. They're more like a family than a group of criminals partnering together.

The Blade sometimes makes casual references to when Siren was younger. Like *younger*, younger. Like he was there to raise the guy. Siren did call the Angel his dad. The Blade doesn't look blood related, but he seems to be really close to the Angel.

Tommy's spotted them holding hands more than once, both of them sitting and doing their own thing with their fingers laced together.

And that's the other thing. He keeps getting herded back to the Angel's room whenever he looks too tired by Siren's standards. Which is fucking *terrifying* and he wishes that Siren would fucking *quit*. Because the Blade and Siren are dangerous enough but the Angel is so much worse.

Only he, like Siren and the Blade, insists on being weirdly nice. He talks to Tommy and it's not the sort of talking that Schlatt used to do. He's not being monologued *at*, the way he's used to.

He was like a pet to Schlatt, he didn't get to talk, he got to be kept close and under control. And Schlatt loved nothing more than the sound of his own fucking voice so Tommy got to hear it a lot.

The Angel talks *to* him. Shares stories with him, about the Blade, about Siren, about their friends. Occasionally he asks questions, but they're always about dumb shit. Things that don't *matter*. There's nothing in the answers that would *get* the guy anything. No leverage, no hints about Tommy's past.

Why the *fuck* would the Angel even *care* about his favorite color?

He can almost start to wonder, sometimes, if the Blade was telling the truth. If they actually do care. If they don't want to hurt him, to keep him in the way that Schlatt did.

He can't risk that though. He can't start thinking like that, because if he's wrong. And he probably is, that's just the way the world fucking *works*, then he'll fuck up. He's going to fuck up somehow regardless, but its better if he goes in eyes open. Ready for it.

He's been here for a few days. He can't forget everything he learned, every bloody lesson carved into his skin and bones in a few days. Even if its been years since he needed these rules, they're still there, written deep in his heart.

So when the fourth day dawns, he stands before the Blade and says, "I can heal again."

The Blade looks up from his phone. "Hm?"

"He's still not fully healed," Tommy says, motioning to the Angel's room, "I've rested enough, I can use my power again."

He's surprised that they haven't made him do it before now. Schlatt never wasted time like this.

The Blade sets his phone aside and folds his hands together, studying Tommy quietly. Tommy holds still, keeping his eyes fixed on the wall behind the Blade's ear. They don't like him to look down, but he's still not looking them in the eyes.

He forces his breathing to stay steady and even as he waits for the Blade's judgement.

"Alright," he says finally. "Come on then."

He stands and pads down the hall to the Angel's room. Tommy follows. Nerves hum under his skin. This is the part he hates, approaching the wounded predator, knowing that he is about to make them strong while he weakens himself.

He'll be helpless to defend himself after a healing, but the Angel of Death will be stronger. He's already more than capable of hurting Tommy, killing him. All it would take is a touch.

Just one brush of his hand and Tommy would be dead.

But he's been in arm's reach of the Angel dozens of times. He's been fucking *asleep* next to the Angel and he's still alive.

They still need him, though. When the Angel's healed, who knows what he'll do.

Tommy shudders, hunching his shoulders. The hoodie that Siren got him is a bit too big, Tommy wishes he could shelter in it like a fucking turtle. That would be a nice power to have. Better than fucking healing.

The room is dim as always, the Angel and Siren are watching something together on the laptop. They look up when the Blade and Tommy enter, though.

"Kid's up for another round of healing," the Blade says.

"Techno," Siren says, his voice weirdly disappointed, a little accusing.

“He offered,” the Blade says, and Siren’s gaze lands squarely on Tommy.

“You don’t have to,” he says. “I mean it, Tommy, its alright. Puffy will be back in a couple weeks, Phil can live with being on bed rest until then.”

He can say that all he fucking wants, Tommy’s not falling for it. He has no idea *why* Siren wouldn’t want the Angel healed but he’s clearly the lowest ranking member of the group. He’s not the one in charge here.

“I appreciate it if you want to,” the Angel says, “but you don’t have to, Tommy.”

Finally, something easy, something normal. A chance to prove his loyalty, his obedience. “I’ll do it,” Tommy says, the words come easily. A bit of tension falls out of his spine. This is an easy test.

“Phil,” Siren complains.

“Its alright mate,” the Angel says. At the edge of his vision, Tommy can see him turning to Siren, making some sort of significant facial expression probably. Tommy doesn’t try to see it, doesn’t try to figure out what the Angel is trying to tell Siren.

Its not his business, it would be above his pay grade if he got paid. He’s here to heal the Angel. That’s all he’s got to do.

The Angel pats the bed beside himself, “come on up here mate,” he says, “Will says you get loopy after you heal. I don’t want you falling or anything.”

Tommy isn’t going to *argue* with him but fuck does he not want to get that close to the Angel again. Why is this his life? Why couldn’t he just get some dumb power like the ability to tell when someone’s going to sneeze? He knew a guy with that one.

He crawls up into the bed. Its soft and welcoming for a place occupied by literally the most dangerous person in the city. He sits on his knees beside the Angel. “I’m gonna have to--” he makes a motion with his hand, half reaching out before he draws it back. He’s not going to fucking touch the Angel of Death without permission.

“Alright,” the Angel says, “go for it mate.” He moves his arm so Tommy can get closer. Great.

Tommy scoots forward. He reaches out. His hand is shaking. He takes a deep breath and lowers it to the Angel’s chest. The bullet hit him right next to his heart, he was probably saved by some idle turn or shift. Otherwise he’d be dead.

Tommy would probably be dead too, because the Blade was murderous enough when the Angel was just injured. If he’d been killed none of them would have made it out of there.

Fucking dumbass heroes.

Tommy takes a deep breath and shoves those thoughts out of his head. He lived, the Angel lived, and now he’s got to heal him. He licks his lips nervously, “I’m gonna. Start now. You’ll

feel kind of tired and fuzzy.”

“Alright,” the Angel says. Tommy can’t bring himself to look at his face, but his body language is relaxed. Under Tommy’s hand, his heart beats steady and calm.

Tommy takes another deep breath, and nudges his power. The trance wraps him in fuzzy softness. It’s always hard to remind himself of how dangerous this is when he’s healing. He’s helpless, but his mind is consumed by warmth. Everything moves slow, everything seems like so much less of a big deal.

He knows *why* he’s scared of them, he knows he *should* be scared of them but. They’ve been so nice.

Will was always really nice, he’s *still* really nice. They’re nicer than Schlatt was. The Blade and the Angel are intimidating but the Blade said he was safe with them. Said they wouldn’t hurt him.

Schlatt never promised anything like that. Never knelt before Tommy and told him that he was under his protection, that it was okay to be scared and confused.

Schlatt never stroked a hand through his hair and gently tugged him down to lay his head on his chest. But that’s what the Angel is doing.

Tommy whines, anxious and confused and longing. He doesn’t want to be this close to the Angel of Death. He *knows* that it’s dangerous. Those fingers that are so gently working apart a tangle could kill him. Have killed so many others. But they are so very gentle.

“Easy mate,” the Angel croons, “you’re alright. Thanks for the healing, I feel much better now.”

The praise settles softly into his heart and a bit of tension drains out of his spine. He dares to snuggle a little closer.

The Angel hums approvingly, “there you go,” He murmurs, “you’re doing great.”

Tommy leans up into his hand for a second, then shies away. Even in the trance, he knows how dangerous this is. This strange, intoxicating cocktail of safety and danger. He feels delirious, like this is all a hallucination.

“That’s right,” the Angel says, a smile in his voice. He sounds soft, fond. A thin noise rises out of Tommy’s chest. “I know,” the Angel murmurs, “I know. Go ahead and get comfy mate, you can stay right here.”

The trance makes everything feel soft and warm and safe, even if it isn’t safe. The Angel’s voice is so gentle, so kind, that Tommy can’t resist. He lays down, curled into the Angel of Death’s side, with that dangerous, deadly hand combing through his hair.

“There you go,” the Angel says again. His hand strokes down the back of Tommy’s head, tracing his spine down the back of his neck. He massages there for a moment, until the last dregs of tension ease away and Tommy lays boneless against him.

“He reminds me of you,” the Angel says over his head, his voice unguarded and nakedly fond. “I remember the first time you got sick. You tried to hide it from me and you managed for a couple days, but I caught you throwing up one night. You ended up cuddled up with me just like this.”

“You’re such a sap,” the Blade groans. “You’re talking about him like he was two.”

Will snorts, “you can pretend all you want Techno but don’t think I didn’t notice your shadows hovering that whole time. I’m surprised they didn’t tattle on me.”

The Angel laughs, it rumbles through Tommy’s cheek, hides the beat of the Angel’s heart for a moment. He presses closer.

“Careful,” the Angel murmurs, “that’s still a little tender.”

Tommy flinches and pulls away, but the Angel catches him with an arm around the shoulders. He whines, a thin, fearful, sound. Words are too...floaty. They dart out of his reach like skittish birds when he tries to find the right ones. To apologize, he has to apologize before--

“Shhh, none of that,” the Angel says, “you’re alright. I’m not mad. I’m not going to hurt you.”

He holds Tommy close, a dark wing closes around him, but he doesn’t feel trapped. He feels safe, like its a shelter, not a prison.

“We’re going to find who did that to you,” the Angel murmurs, his hand rubs circles into the back of Tommy’s neck, “and we’ll make them regret it. You don’t need to be scared of us.”

“You took advantage of him,” Will says, disapproving. “You knew he wouldn’t say no.”

“A little,” the Angel agrees, “but its not like healing me hurt him any. And I really do hate bed rest.”

“You’re terrible.”

“I’m a supervillain, Wilbur.”

“Don’t supervillain at Tommy,” Will scolds, “he’s skittish enough.”

“I know,” the Angel murmurs sympathetically, the hand turns to run the back of its knuckles against Tommy’s skin. “He’s getting better though. He’s figuring it out. You know we’re not going to hurt you, don’t you?”

Tommy makes a vague sound, neither agreement nor denial and hopes that’s good enough.

“We won’t,” Will says, “I know I made a promise before, and I broke it.” The mattress sinks beneath another weight, another hand hesitantly touches his head. “I’m so sorry that I did. I really am Toms, and you don’t have to forgive me, but I’m going to make it up to you.”

Tommy turns enough to see Will. He's looking down at him with a sorrowful expression on his face. Tommy doesn't think he's ever seen someone look so regretful at him.

He leans into Will's hand and shuts his eyes.

"Oh Toms," Will murmurs. His hand comes down to cup Tommy's cheek. "We'll keep you safe. From everyone, even ourselves. Don't be scared."

He lets his head fall into Will's hand, its too heavy to hold up. He's tired. They keep *talking* and part of him keeps insisting that he can't sleep here, curled up next to the Angel of Death. The Angel is warm though, and the bed is soft, and the blankets are nice and Will is here.

"Yeah, you're alright," the Blade says. "I guess I don't mind having you around."

"Techno you're not fooling anyone," the Angel says.

"I don't know what you're talking about."

Tommy pulls away from Will's hand to lay his head back on the Angel's chest.

"Oh," Will says, his voice is all small and sad. Tommy grumbles and reaches blindly for his wrist. He catches it and pulls it to rest back on his head. "Oh," Will says again, softer, more fond.

Tommy hums.

"Alright," Will murmurs. "I guess you probably want us to stop talking and let you sleep."

Tommy hums again.

"Get some rest mate," the Angel says, "we'll be right here."

Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Techno tilts his head, “kid’s up.”

Phil covers the pot, “good, we can go talk to him.”

“Are you sure now is a good time for that?” Wilbur asks.

“No better time than the present mate,” Phil says, dropping a kiss on his head as he walks past. “I’m betting he’ll be a bit more wary of me now that I’m up and about, I don’t want him to be scared.”

Chapter Notes

Another chapter of soft! We're fast approaching the end of Trash, but don't worry, there's still a Lot more stuff written for this universe.

Sorry if the notes seemed a little grumpy yesterday, I really do love y'all's comments but I'm not super good at handling it when other people are angry around me even if its not directed at me.

Anyway, another day, another chapter! enjoy!

“Phil sit down,” Techno scolds. “Phil, I mean it.”

“I’m *fine*, ” Phil argues, he’s still a bit unsteady on his feet, but he’s not actively dying. Not that you could tell from the way Techno is acting.

“You were shot.”

“A week ago, and I got healed. Which, by the way, keep your voice down, you're going to wake him up.”

“*Phil.*”

“Its just a bit of soup Techno, I’ve just got to chop a few things and leave it to simmer. Its *fine.*”

Techno growls, but gives up on arguing. They’re lucky that they got Phil to stay on bed rest for as long as they did. He hovers behind Phil, glowering but clearly ready to catch him if he shows the slightest sign of pain or fatigue.

Will sits on the bar stool at the counter. Phil already seems more lively and awake. Better than the last time he was here. His hand is steady and confident on the knife as he cuts up vegetables from his rooftop garden. Techno had been the one to get them despite Phil reminding him that he could fly and therefore falling off the roof was less dangerous for *him* .

Wilbur runs a hand over the counter. Its been cleaned and sanitized, but he swears he can still see the shadow of Phil's blood on it. If Tommy hadn't been there they could have lost Phil. And Wilbur would have lost Techno too.

There's no world where Phil goes out that Techno doesn't follow. He'd probably have taken out half the city with him when he went, but he'd have made sure he followed Phil. And then it would have just been Wilbur.

Their work is dangerous. Any hero could get a lucky shot in on any of them.

But not this time. This time fate was in their favor.

This time they had Tommy.

Wilbur was always determined to save him, but Tommy had ended up saving *him*.

At the cost of that precious, fragile trust, yes. But maybe Tommy is starting to trust him again. He hadn't pulled away when Will touched him this time, he'd still been scared, but less than before.

The wooziness that came after he healed didn't leave him sweet and soft and smiley like it did when he healed Will's arm. But he'd still been cuddly, more so than the last time. He hadn't pulled away.

Wilbur clings to that.

Maybe more than he should, but he's always been an optimist.

He rests his chin on his folded arms and watches the soup come together. Its a familiar recipe, something Phil's made every time one of them is sick or hurt. The scent is comforting, like a signal that now everything will be alright. Things are bad, but that is being put behind them. They're all here, they're all together.

It'll be awhile before Tommy is awake, but they have things to keep themselves busy.

Now that Phil is up and about again they have plans to make for their return. People need to remember *exactly* why they aren't to be trifled with. The Mayor's plans for a new Vault will not be allowed to come to fruition. Not while even one of them is alive.

The preliminaries are set up, plans laid, shadows sent to scout the exact location, gear checked and weapons tended. They return to the apartment and get lunch. The soup is just as good as always.

Techno tilts his head, "kid's up."

Phil covers the pot, “good, we can go talk to him.”

“Are you sure now is a good time for that?” Wilbur asks.

“No better time than the present mate,” Phil says, dropping a kiss on his head as he walks past. “I’m betting he’ll be a bit more wary of me now that I’m up and about, I don’t want him to be scared.”

It’s probably a *bit* late for that, because Phil is literally The Angel of Death and nothing more in Tommy’s eyes. But maybe they can keep him from getting more scared.

Wilbur pads after Phil, hopeful that he will be a bit of a familiar presence for Tommy. A reassurance instead of a cause for more anxiety.

He misses the days on the bench. Tommy laughing loud and boisterous beside him. Unafraid.

Tommy is on the bed still, sitting on Techno’s side with his feet hovering over the edge like he was about to stand up. One of Techno’s shadows is at the foot of the bed and Tommy is watching it warily.

It’s watching him back with what Wilbur can recognize as a friendly air. The Shadows love Tommy, Tommy is less confident in them. This one has chosen to be physical, laying with its head on not-quite-paws.

Tommy looks away from it when he realizes who’s coming into the room with him.

“Hey mate,” Phil says, friendly and calm. The shadow slinks off the bed and winds around him like a friendly cat before it leans its head on his hip.

Tommy’s hands are twisted into the blankets and his eyes are fixed on his lap. “Hello s--” He cuts himself off but Wilbur knows he was about to call Phil ‘sir’.

Wilbur knew it. He knew he shouldn’t have let Tommy heal Phil again. Phil and Techno are of the opinion that Tommy will just “figure out” that they’re not like whoever the hell made him so paranoid.

(Whoever that is, wherever they are, Wilbur hopes they have some sense of how *fucked* they are when he finds them.)

Tommy isn’t just going to figure it out though. They don’t know Tommy, not like Wilbur does. They weren’t there when Tommy just up and vanished for a week because Wilbur knew about his power.

They weren’t there when he came back. Lonely and starving and scared, all of the trust that Wilbur had worked to build hanging on by a tenuous thread.

That thread was snapped, cruelly, suddenly, and now they are trying to start over. They’re doing worse than starting over. They are actively a threat in Tommy’s mind.

Phil is smiling his calm, friendly “everything is fine” smile.

“How are you feeling?” Phil takes a casual step forward and perches on the edge of the bed. “You still look a little tired.”

“A little,” Tommy says carefully. His shoulders are drawn up to his ears, his eyes firmly away from Phil.

“I’m making some soup,” Phil says like he doesn’t notice. “You want me to bring you a bowl or are you up for coming out and eating with us?”

Tommy’s eyes widen where they’re fixed on his hands. He bites at his lip, Wilbur can practically see the calculations going on in his mind. Trying to find the right answer.

“It’s fine either way,” Will says, Tommy jumps a little, like he’d forgotten Wilbur was there. “You can stay here if you’re tired. Or just not up for company.”

“I--” Tommy shuts his mouth again, hunching in on himself even more.

Wilbur turns to Phil. He doesn’t know what he wants, to give a silent “I told you so” or to get some sort of guidance or reassurance.

“There’s no wrong answer mate,” Phil says. “You remember what Techno told you? We’re not going to hurt you or be angry at you. Certainly not over some soup.”

Tommy nods, but he’s still looking down, still tense.

“Tommy, mate,” Phil says, and he crouches at the edge of the bed, in front of Tommy. “I get that you’re scared, and you’re trying to do what we want, and me just saying shit isn’t going to make you believe it. You’ve got to take a little risk though, take a chance on us. We can’t prove anything to you if you’re doing this.” He motions to Tommy, sitting docile and submissive.

Tommy’s breath hitches a little bit.

“Look at me,” Phil commands softly. Slowly, Tommy’s head lifts. “Are you still tired? I’ll be happy to bring you some soup if you are, you can hang out here. I don’t mind.”

Tommy is quiet for a long moment, his hands twitching, a muscle in his jaw jumping as he clenches his teeth together. “I can get it,” he says finally.

“Alright,” Phil says, slowly getting back to his feet. “Let’s go get some lunch then.”

Tommy doesn’t move until Phil is fully up and out of arm’s reach, and then he drops his feet to the floor and stands. And then he nearly falls over.

Wilbur lunges for him, but Phil is closer, he catches Tommy under the arms. Tommy jerks, half flailing away from Phil before he apparently decides that he’s supposed to just let Phil do whatever he wants and hangs still in his hands.

“Easy,” Phil says, righting him and carefully letting him go. He keeps his hands hovering in the air next to Tommy, ready to catch him if he starts to go down again. “You good?”

“Yes, sorry. Sorry.” Tommy wraps his arms around himself, curling away from Phil.

“All good mate, you sure you can make it all the way out to the living room?”

“Yes. I’m fine. I just-- I’m fine.”

“Alright,” Phil says, slowly stepping away. “Let’s go get some food then shall we?”

He flicks a glance to Wilbur subtly motioning for him to stay behind Tommy to catch him if he falls again on the way there. Thankfully, Tommy manages to keep his feet until they make it to the livingroom. He just stands there, like he’s waiting for the next order.

“Have a seat mate,” Phil says, patting the bar stool as he goes by. Tommy slowly hauls himself up onto it. Wilbur’s glad he chose the one with armrests that will hopefully keep him in the seat if he passes out.

Phil ladles a sizeable scoop into a bowl for the kid and slides it down the counter to him.

“There you go, if you’re still hungry feel free to ask for more, I made plenty.”

“Thank you,” Tommy mutters, his hand hesitates over the spoon. The moment stretches out. Fuck, is he waiting for fucking *permission*? Wilbur opens his mouth, but Phil sends him another look and he reluctantly shuts it. Finally, *finally*, Tommy picks it up and takes a bite.

He hunches over the bowl, his head still angled down but twitching in a way that says he’s glancing at the both of them.

“You want some more too Will?” Phil asks casually.

“Yeah, a bit,” Wilbur says even though he’s not all that hungry. Tommy did it, he tested them, at least a tiny bit. They can’t make a big deal out of it but god does Wilbur want to scoop the kid up and tell him he’s proud.

Is this how Phil felt with him? Fuck.

Techno appears from the less civilian friendly parts of the apartment, the door sliding shut and disappearing behind him. Tommy tenses as he comes closer, but Techno studiously ignores him. Walking past the counter and over to the stove.

He drops his chin on top of Phil’s head. “Pretty sure you’re not supposed to be up.”

“Pretty sure you’re being a mother hen,” Phil says serenely. “You want some soup?”

“Had some. Go sit.”

“I’m fine, Techno.”

“You’re injured, Phil.”

“Go mother hen Tommy,” Phil says, shooving Techno away.

“I do *not* mother hen people.”

“He nearly fell when he stood up,” Phil says sweetly.

Techno turns to Tommy, looking him over with an assessing eye. “I told you to eat, kid.”

Tommy is quiet and tense for a long moment, and then he opens his mouth and says, “I *am* eating.”

It's not quite the old level of snark and spite. Not what Wilbur's used to, but it's more backtalk than Tommy's done the entire time he's been here.

And he did it to *Techno*.

He looks utterly petrified now, but he still did it. Techno snorts softly and ruffles Tommy's hair, ignoring the flinch. “Good. Keep doin' that.”

Techno brushes past Wilbur on his way out of the kitchen. His hand pats Wilbur's shoulder once, casual, comforting.

Sap.

Tommy runs his fingers through his hair, as though somehow Techno had messed up the specific mess he was going for with it. He goes back to eating, but his shoulders are less tense. His eyes aren't darting around the room.

It's a start.

Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

But he doesn't hurt Tommy. None of them do, none of them even threaten or glare or anything else. Its weird. It feels like he's in some strange limbo, somewhere between safe and in danger. Because they're not threatening him, but this shit can't last. This sort of thing never lasts. Like a house of cards, its all got to come down at some point. Tommy's pretty sure that point is going to be today. Because they're all gearing up. There is a palpable difference between the Blade and The Blade, fully outfitted, armed, angry, and ready to take that out on the world.

Chapter Notes

Woke up at 2AM and couldn't go back to sleep, no thoughts, head empty, enjoy chapter.

He doesn't trust them. He's not that stupid. He isn't going to start mouthing off (much) or falling asleep in their laps or some shit. He's not a fucking idiot.

But Tommy will admit that this place is worlds better than Schlatt. They don't yell at him, they don't get drunk, they don't kick him or hit him or make him worry that he's slipped up one time too many. They just...Live together. And now Tommy lives with them.

He gets added to the chore rotation. And it is a rotation not a "since you're not needed for healing you can do this shit" sort of situation. Everyone does their fair share, Tommy now included.

He has his own room, and he's not locked into it at night, or any other time. He gets the same amount of food as everyone else, maybe even more because the Blade is still weirdly insistent that he eat.

Tommy is half suspicious that the guy is fattening him up to feed him to his shadows. They're certainly hanging around him like vultures circling a weak animal.

They don't attack though, or do any more hovering over him than they seem to do the other people.

There are places he's not allowed, whatever the fuck is going on behind the door in the kitchen, for one. He's pretty sure that's the actual Evil Lair though so Tommy doesn't really want to go there. Ever.

Part of him is curious, because he is that sort of idiot, and part of him wants to see to make sure they're not like..torturing other teenagers that they've kidnapped down there.

He is enough of an idiot to be reasonably sure that they're not doing that though. He has pretty much no reason to put that sort of faith in them. They're supervillains, their baseline operating level of crazy is *dangerous as fuck* and they're *weird* supervillains on top of that. Who knows what the hell they're doing.

Not Tommy, but for some reason his stupid brain can't imagine them killing kids for kicks.

So he relaxes a bit. Not much, not the way he used to be before he knew Will was Siren but he's confident that they're not going to crush him like a bug for accidentally insulting them somehow. The rules here are easy enough to figure out and follow.

Don't break shit, don't be overly respectful, and don't get yourself hurt. He's tempted to add the Blade's insistence on him eating as a rule but the guy also doesn't really do anything if Tommy *doesn't* eat so he's not sure if that counts.

Honestly nothing really happens if he breaks *any* of the rules. Obviously he hasn't broken anything, he's not that fucking dumb, but that's just one of those rules that's the same everywhere. Nobody wants their shit broken by some dumb street kid. Its the same if he's a foster kid or if he's the healer-brat.

He did slip once and get himself a bruise and Siren and the Angel had fucking *hovered* like he'd broken a limb. Which was. Weird. And *stressful*. Because the Angel of Death, the guy who can kill with a single touch, is a *tactile* guy.

But he doesn't hurt Tommy. None of them do, none of them even threaten or glare or anything else. Its weird. It feels like he's in some strange limbo, somewhere between safe and in danger. Because they're not threatening him, but this shit can't last. This sort of thing never lasts. Like a house of cards, its all got to come down at some point.

Tommy's pretty sure that point is going to be today. Because they're all gearing up. There is a palpable difference between the Blade and *The Blade*, fully outfitted, armed, angry, and ready to take that out on the world.

Siren and the Angel are slipping into that dangerous air too. They move more smoothly, their muscles tense and ready for combat. Their footsteps become whisper silent. There is a sharp, dangerous, familiar smirk on the Angel's lips.

The sort of confidence that comes from knowing you can kill anyone with a touch. The sort of dark pleasure that comes from being willing to do it.

Tommy sits very still and very quiet and watches them get ready to unleash themselves on the world.

Siren rests a hand on his shoulder, its gentle, still, but there is a humming around him. Energy waiting to be released. "We'll be back in a few hours," he says, squeezing Tommy's shoulder reassuringly. "There's leftovers in the fridge if you get hungry. I left my phone on the counter

in case there's an emergency, Phil and Techno's numbers are on it. TV's got netflix and some games if you get bored."

"Right."

Siren smiles at him, its strange to see such a gentle expression on such a dangerous man.

"Alright. Be good."

"Yeah."

"Bye Tommy," The Angel says, his smile shows too many teeth, his eyes gleam with bloody anticipation, but none of it is aimed at Tommy. "We'll be back."

"Eat while we're gone," the Blade grunts.

And then they leave.

Tommy watches the door for a minute. Two.

They don't come back.

He could leave.

He *should* leave.

He should run, as far and as fast as he can, while he can. They're going to be back. He's got a few hours to get a headstart on them. With the Blade's shadows they could find him in no time, but they'd have to catch up to him. As long as he kept moving constantly he could probably evade them.

There's a lot of dark places in the city, and the Blade has a limited number of shadows. Surely he could keep away from them. He should do it, before they return.

They're going to come back once they're done wreaking whatever havoc they're unleashing. They're going to come back here, high on blood and adrenaline, the way Schlatt and his crew used to. They'll be looking for something to take the last bits of their aggression out on.

And here's Tommy. Helpless, healer, Tommy. He can fix himself easily, so what does it matter if he gets a few cuts, a few bruises, a few broken bones.

He's a living punching bag that does self-repair.

Perfect to sate that last little bit of bloodlust.

He should run, because he might have been able to survive Schlatt and his crew, but he really fucking doubts he'd survive the Angel's.

He doesn't move though. He keeps sitting on the couch, watching the minutes tick by. Because for some dumb fucking reason, he can't imagine them attacking him the way

Schlatt's crew did. Can't imagine them laughing as he begs them to stop. Can't imagine running and hiding and hoping that this time, *this time*, he hid well enough.

He could run, he should run, but he doesn't... *want to*.

He wants to stay, wants the kindness, and the warmth, and what his idiot heart insists on labeling as 'safety.'

Instead of packing, instead of running, instead of trying to find a good place to hide, Tommy puts on a movie. Some documentary that he doesn't really pay attention to. Its just nice to have another voice in the apartment.

When did he get so used to having other people with him?

After an hour, he gets the leftovers out of the fridge, the last of the soup the Angel made. He warms it up and watches the documentary while he eats.

The soup is good, filling and warm in his belly. He sets the empty bowl aside and finds himself laying on the couch. The narrator goes on about ants or something and he closes his eyes. Just for a minute.

The door slams shut. "Shh," someone scolds, "I think he's asleep."

Tommy opens his eyes, the Angel of Death is looming over him. Fully geared up, there is blood spattered across his face. He isn't injured.

"Oop, hey mate. We're back. Sorry for waking you up."

"Phil quit looming, you've got blood on your face. Nobody wants to wake up to that," the Blade draws.

The Angel swipes his fingers over his face, leaving streaks in the spatter. He rubs his fingers together. "Whoops," he says lightly. He goes back around the couch. As Tommy sits up he can hear the kitchen sink running.

"Don't get hero blood on the kitchen towels!" Siren scolds, "go get the work towels."

"You're so picky," the Angel says, audibly rolling his eyes.

Tommy sits up. The Blade and Siren are by the door, the Siren looks like he's doing his best to support the Blade's weight, his arm wrapped around his shoulders. "Hey Toms," Siren says, smiling at him briefly before he turns back to the Angel. "Those are nice towels, I *like* those towels. Don't get hero blood on the nice towels."

"Fine, fine."

The Angel slips through the kitchen door to the Evil Lair part of the apartment. Tommy wonders how they managed to get that set up. He doesn't think he's heard anyone else in this

entire building. They probably aren't bothering any neighbors then.

Siren rounds the couch, the Blade is definitely limping. Fuck. "scooch," the Blade grunts at him. Tommy scooches.

He pulls his legs to his chest and the Blade lets go of Siren and dumps himself on the couch. "Grab me some ice," he orders Siren.

"On it," Siren says, heading back towards the kitchen.

The Blade carefully lifts his bad leg up, snagging the decorative pillow from the armchair and sticking it on the coffee table. He hisses as he wiggles his boot off, moving gingerly. As soon as his sock is off Tommy can see why. His ankle is already swollen and starting to go purple.

Twisted, Tommy bets.

The Blade props it up on the coffee table and spreads his arms over the back of the couch. He leans his head back, eyes closed, a soft sigh escapes his lips.

Tommy watches, waiting. Should he show initiative? Offer to heal it, or just reach out and do it? He shifts.

The Blade opens one eye. Tommy freezes.

"Hey kid," the Blade grunts. Less a call to attention and more a greeting. Casual, friendly.

The whole group seems surprisingly mellow. Like a pride of lions content to rest in the sun after a kill. They aren't still high on blood, they aren't twitching, hunting, looking for their next target.

Maybe they're safe enough to be around. As safe as it can be to be near lions with blood on their mouths.

"Hi," Tommy says, maybe a bit later than is polite.

"Ice," Siren announces, dropping a rag into the Blade's lap. "Hi Tommy, you do alright while we were gone?"

"Yeah," Tommy says, "I was just. Chilling."

Siren smiles, "good. I'm gonna go get out of this stuff, be right back."

The door in the kitchen hisses shut.

Alright. If there was ever a time its now. Before the Blade has to ask. Show him that he can be good, he can be useful, loyal. Siren seems to have some problem with him healing, but he's not here, and the Blade outranks him either way.

Tommy shifts again.

The Blade opens his eyes, watching him, waiting, expectant.

“I--uh.” Tommy motions to his ankle. “I can--”

“No.” The Blade shuts his eyes again.

Tommy blinks. “Huh?”

“No,” the Blade repeats.

“But--”

“No.”

“Okay.” Tommy curls up against the arm of the couch. The Blade grunts approvingly and settles deeper into the cushions.

The documentary isn’t playing anymore. Siren and the Angel are gone. The apartment is quiet around them. The Blade is injured. He’s just...sitting there. And Tommy is just sitting here.

Not healing him.

He literally has *one job* and he’s just sitting here.

“Are you--”

“Yes.”

Tommy twists his hands together, longing to reach out. It wouldn’t take much. Just a quick little flicker of power. Wouldn’t even make him that tired probably.

“Don’t do it,” the Blade rumbles, even though his eyes are closed and Tommy hasn’t made a single move towards him. There is a shadow under the TV that’s sprouted eyes. When Tommy looks at it, it sits up, taking the half-wolfish form and grins at him.

“But--”

The Blade opens his eyes, turning to fully face Tommy. “You don’t have to heal everything in front of you kid. Phil was one thing, this is a twisted ankle, it’ll be fine in a few days.”

Tommy squeezes his fingers more tightly together. “But--”

The Blade doesn’t interrupt him, but he still cuts himself off. He shouldn’t be arguing. The Blade gave an order, *several times* now. But it doesn’t make *sense*.

He’s hurt, he needs healing, Tommy is a healer, he’s *right here*, there’s a certain order of events. The Angel and Siren didn’t seem to be hurt, the Blade isn’t saving Tommy’s power for them.

“Hm?” the Blade prompts.

“You’re hurt?” Tommy says.

“Yup.”

“I can heal it.”

“Nope.”

The Blade has seen him heal a nearly fatal bullet wound, he has to know that Tommy could heal a twisted ankle. “It wouldn’t take that much energy. I’ve rested, I can--”

“No. Kid.”

Tommy hunches his shoulders, looking down at his hands. His knuckles are going white.

The Blade is *injured* and Tommy is *right here* but-- Tommy stifles a sound that wants to come out of his throat. Something confused and frustrated.

He can feel the weight of the Blade’s eyes on him. “They got you all twisted up, didn’t they?” He murmurs.

Tommy glances to him, a habitual “sir?” dies before it passes his lips.

“You don’t have to heal me kid,” The Blade says, “its a twisted ankle, it’ll be fine. I was dumb enough to get hurt, I can be patient for a little bit until its back in shape.”

“But I can heal it.”

The Blade sighs, Tommy’s shoulders curl inwards. “I don’t need you to heal it, I don’t want you to heal it. You’ve done enough for us. This won’t kill me, you don’t need to waste your energy healing it. There’s no debt here, if anything, we owe you. But the food, the shelter, that’s free. That’s part of living here, that’s part of being one of us.”

“One of you?” Tommy asks, his voice small and quiet.

“We aren’t keeping you around because you’re a healer,” the Blade says, “you’re a kid, you’re a friend, you’re under our protection because Wilbur met you and liked you. And Phil and I like you too. As a person, not as an asset, or a pet, or whatever fucked up shit you’ve been through.”

The words slide off his brain like water off a duck’s back. They may as well be in a foreign language because they don’t make sense. They refuse to sink in.

They’re too big, the things they mean are too complicated, too terrifying. Tommy wants nothing more than to shut them out, ignore them and all of their possibilities.

Why is it that every time he ends up alone with the Blade he does this? How can he continuously just *say things* that make *no sense* like they’re simple facts?

“You’re hurt though,” Tommy says, because that makes sense. The Blade is hurt and Tommy is a healer.

He should be healing him. But when he leans forward, the Blade catches him gently by the wrist and pulls his hand away. “No, kid.”

“But--”

The Blade tugs him closer and tucks him under his arm. He’s still dressed for battle, his clothes are thick and rough. There’s something that feels like the hilt of a knife digging into Tommy’s side. It feels like there’s another sheathed on the Blade’s forearm.

“I--”

“Hush,” the Blade says. “Stop worrying about it. Its not your problem, you don’t have to heal every injury in front of you.”

But he *does* .

Doesn’t he?

The door in the kitchen hisses open again. The Blade doesn’t so much as twitch.

“Well don’t you two look cozy,” the Angel says, he’s smiling, back in civilian clothes, his hair damp. He looks calm, he’s not itching to let out the last bits of rage. He sits in the armchair, propping his feet up on the coffee table beside the Blade’s.

“Tell the kid no healing,” the Blade rumbles, “he doesn’t seem to believe me.”

The Angel looks at him with a frown, his eyes catching on the Blade’s hand, still wrapped around Tommy’s wrist. “Aw mate, its alright. Techno heals fast anyway, he’ll be good as new in no time.”

Tommy bites his lip and doesn’t argue. Even though he wants to. “It would just take--”

“No,” the Blade says again, patient and steady.

The door hisses open again, “Techno are you getting hero blood on the couch?!”

“You literally put me here.”

“I didn’t realize you were going to stain it!”

“Oh for the love of-- we can get a new couch.”

“I *like* this couch!”

“You’re so picky,” the Blade grumbles.

“I’m sorry that you’re both savages,” Siren grouches, “but some of us have had enough of living in disgusting places. Right Toms?”

“Leave the kid out of your weird obsession with cleanliness. He’s got his own weird obsessions to deal with.”

Siren seems to notice where exactly Tommy is then, “why are you holding Tommy hostage?”

“I’m not holding him hostage,” the Blade snorts, “I’m saving him from himself.”

Tommy kind of wishes that the Blade would quit bringing Siren and the Angel into this. Because they’re all being weird about it. If he’d *just* let Tommy--

“What’s up Toms,” Siren says, dropping himself onto the couch beside them. He’s in civilian clothes too, there’s no danger in the lines of his body, he’s relaxed, friendly, harmless.

“He’s got a thing about healing apparently.”

“I *told* you not to let him heal Phil that second time,” Siren growls. “Toms you don’t have to heal anyone, okay?”

“But--!” Tommy cuts himself off and can’t suppress a wordless growl. He tugs his wrist and the Blade lets it go. He rubs his hands over his face. “Its just-- I can heal it. I’m supposed to heal it.”

“No,” the Blade says again.

Tommy glares at him behind his hands. He’s not dumb enough to do it openly. He is dumb enough to argue with the Blade about this though, and to drag the Angel and Siren into it.

Why do they have to be weird? Why do they have to be kind and gentle and friendly, why can’t they do things the way they’re supposed to?

It doesn’t make *sense*.

“Oh Toms,” Siren murmurs, and then there are gentle hands on his shoulders, tugging him to a narrow chest, his head tucked under a sharp chin. His hand brushes Tommy’s side, where it was pressed against the Blade. “You got hero blood on Tommy!”

The Blade sighs, “alright, I’ll go change, goodness sake. Phil help me up.”

The Angel laughs and the couch shifts as the Blade gets off of it. Tommy can hear his limping steps and the Angel’s shuffling as he supports his weight. The kitchen door hisses shut behind them.

Its nice, tucked under Siren’s chin and held in his arms. It shouldn’t be. But when has anything in this fucking place gone the way it should?

“You want to talk to me, Toms?” Siren asks quietly.

Tommy sighs and presses his forehead to Siren’s collarbone. “You’re so. Confusing.” He lifts his head an inch and lets it fall again.

“I know,” Siren says, “ and I know you’re trying to figure it all out. We don’t want anything from you though, we want you to be happy, and safe. That’s all.”

That’s all. He says, like its something small and simple, not something incomprehensible. Not something that goes against everything he knows, everything he’s ever known.

If Tommy had known, when he first found Siren in that fucking dumpster that this was where it would all end up...He doesn’t know what he would have done. On the one hand, he is warm, he is fed, he is, maybe, possibly, safe. Safer than he’s ever been. On the other hand, they’re so *confusing* and dangerous.

So terribly dangerous.

But not to him, apparently.

Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

Here it is fam, the last chapter of One Man's Trash. Definitely not the end of this universe though, don't worry, we're gonna be here for Awhile. After this I've got a three chapter thing with fluff between Tommy and SBI, and then we're on to Sequel and backstories.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

By the second day of Techno limping around the apartment, Tommy looks ready to explode. Every time he sees Techno walking his jaw clenches and his face twists into this heartbreaking mix of confusion and frustration.

He's more anxious than he's been for awhile, he had been starting to calm down a bit, but with Techno limping around he withdraws again. Wilbur is pretty sure its a holdover from whoever had Tommy before. They'd only wanted him for his healing abilities. Having someone wandering around wounded is probably setting off all kinds of memories.

So Wilbur tries to distract him. Movies work for awhile, Tommy starts helping Phil in the kitchen and he seems to like that, Wilbur shows him his guitar and plays for him, though he doesn't sing.

There's only so much they can do from inside the apartment though. No matter where they go, Tommy can either see Techno limping around, or hear him. It doesn't matter how distracted Wilbur had gotten him, the minute he is confronted with Techno's injury he's tense and anxious again.

So the best option to get Tommy to at least attempt to chill for a little while is to take him *out* of the apartment.

Phil mulls over this plan with a small frown. "You're probably right," he says, "it'll be a couple more days til Techno is fully healed, it might be good for Tommy to get away for a bit. Its pretty close to our last outing though mate, you might get recognized."

"Oh no, what a disaster," Wilbur rolls his eyes, "Whatever could I possibly do about that?"

Phil snorts, "you know what I mean. Be careful, don't do anything crazy."

"I was planning to go grocery shopping," Wilbur says, "he likes cooking, it'll be lowkey, and it'll get him out of the house."

"Sounds good," Phil allows, "have you actually *talked* to him about this?"

“Hadn’t gotten there yet,” Wilbur admits. “He’s just. I don’t want him to say yes because its what he thinks I want to hear.”

“He’s gotten better about that.”

“Or better at hiding it,” Wilbur mutters. “He’s been more skittish with Techno being hurt though.”

Phil hums agreement, his face a little sad. “Take him shopping, let him pick out some snacks, see if you can figure out what stuff he actually likes. He just inhales everything I put in front of him.”

“I found him eating literal garbage, Phil.”

“Don’t remind me. I’m already pissed enough at this city.” Phil taps a bit more harshly at the screen in front of him.

“Its not the city I have business with,” Wilbur says, the low, now-familiar curl of rage settles into his gut. “Its whoever the fuck did this to Tommy.”

“We’ll find them,” Phil says, pressing a kiss to his temple, “they can’t hide from us.” His smile is dark and eager when he pulls away, “not forever.”

Wilbur leaves him to his planning and goes back to the apartment proper. Tommy is sitting next to Techno on the couch, tense, as per usual, but not quite as tense as he could be.

“Hey Toms,” Wilbur says, propping his elbows on the space behind Techno’s shoulders. “I was gonna go out shopping, you wanna come?”

Tommy blinks at him like he said something utterly insane. Like he didn’t think he was allowed out of the apartment.

Wilbur keeps up the casual air, carefully hiding the rage that burns in his gut. Someone kept Tommy prisoner, someone made him heal, someone made him fear so deeply and wholly that he doesn’t trust anyone anymore.

They haven’t asked Tommy who, they haven’t asked him anything about his past. Not yet. Not until he trusts them more, not until he wouldn’t think of those questions as an interrogation. Not until they could actually calm him down if memories overwhelm him.

If he got stuck in the past now they wouldn’t be able to do anything for him.

So for now, they stay in the present.

And in the present, Tommy hesitantly nods and comes grocery shopping with him. He sticks to Wilbur’s side, always in reach, always in view. Like he thinks Wilbur thinks he’ll run.

Before the mall, Wilbur would be afraid of that. But Tommy isn’t that spiteful, scrappy kid surviving on the streets now. He’s half trusting, half fearful. Wilbur isn’t sure which one makes him stick so close.

He relaxes as they shop though, he acts like he's never been in a grocery store before. Its possible he hasn't. To be fair, even Wilbur was utterly floored by the sheer amount of *food* just *sitting around* when Phil first took him to a shop after he'd gotten off the streets.

He doesn't actually get Tommy to pick anything, he doesn't even catch the kid staring longingly at anything in particular. There isn't really much they need to pick up, this was a chance to get Tommy out and about for a bit so they don't have many bags when they leave the store.

Wilbur takes the long way home, the way that takes them past the park. Its still winter, there's snow on the ground now, but he stops the car beside the gap in the hedges all the same.

Tommy looks up, surprised, a soft laugh leaves his lips and the tension leaves Wilbur's shoulders. "Come on Toms," he says, pocketing the keys and grabbing one of the bags from the back.

Their footsteps crunch through the snow. The pond is frozen, the trees bare of their leaves, the hedges are skeletal around them. Wilbur brushes snow off of the bench and sits down.

Tommy plops down beside him. The sandwiches are cold from the deli, the hot cocoa is cold tea because it came in bottles. It isn't the same, it probably can't ever be the same even if they did have the hot cocoa and grilled cheese.

Tommy isn't huddled on the far end of the bench though, he's sitting beside Wilbur, nearly close enough to touch, but not quite. They're quiet for a long time, eating their food.

"Any gossip?" Wilbur asks quietly, just for old time's sake.

"Not really," Tommy says, hunching in on himself. "You never needed the gossip, did you?"

He could say that it helped sometimes, to make Tommy feel better, but that's not really what this is about. In the stark white of the undisturbed snow, honesty seems easier. "No, I didn't. I just wanted to check in on you."

"Why?" Tommy asks, "did you know? The whole time?"

"No," Wilbur assures him, "I didn't. Not until I saw you heal that duck."

"That fucking duck," Tommy growls quietly. Wilbur can't help but laugh. "Why did you care then? You're fucking-- You're *Siren*. Why'd you waste your time with some dumb street kid?"

"Because--" Wilbur hesitates, tries to lay his thoughts in order. "At first it was because I used to be a dumb street kid. I know how hard it is. Phil took me in and I wanted to...pay it forward, maybe. You were just. You looked so hungry, and it was getting so cold out."

"At first?" Tommy asks quietly.

"Then it was because it was *you*," Wilbur says, "you're Tommy, my Tommy. You're so...strong, and bright, and I wanted to help you be more like that."

He looks down at his hands, glances at Tommy from the corner of his eye. Tommy is curled in on himself, his brow furrowed in concentration or confusion. He isn't loud and bright now, he's small and quiet and scared.

"I kind of fucked that up," Wilbur murmurs.

Tommy snorts a tiny laugh.

A ghost of a smile passes over Wilbur's lips, but it's gone again just as quickly.

"You could leave if you wanted to," Wilbur says so softly that if the world weren't muffled by snow, he's pretty sure it wouldn't be audible. "I wouldn't come after you, neither would Phil or Techno." With a shaky breath, he closes his eyes.

The world is still, like it's holding its breath.

Tommy's weight leaves the bench. Wilbur doesn't move. Not even when footsteps crunch through the snow, growing more distant. He swallows hard around the lump growing in his throat. His eyes sting and tears slip down his cheeks.

He sits there for a long time. Long enough for Tommy to get far away, long enough for the cold to sink into his skin. Long enough to piece together a script for what the hell he's going to tell Phil and Techno.

Long enough to question himself, long enough to regret not doing this when Tommy had more supplies.

Then he gets up, and he collects the leftovers from his sandwich, and heads towards the car. He pulls the keys out of his pocket, they're ice cold in his grip.

He left it unlocked, they weren't planning to be here long. He drops himself into the front seat and turns to set the bag into the passenger side.

He freezes

Tommy takes the bag from his hand and drops it into the floorboards. "Hey Wilbur," he says softly.

"Hey Toms," Wilbur replies. His voice is thick and choked, he doesn't care.

"Took you long enough, thought I was gonna freeze my ass off waiting for you," Tommy says, and it's not quite the way it used to be. Not loud and laughing, but it's there and that's enough.

He's here, and that's enough.

Wilbur reaches out, slow and careful and Tommy doesn't shy away. Instead he leans into Wilbur's chest. He's shaking, a fine tremor running through every last inch of him.

His breath hitches and Wilbur can feel a hot wet spot growing on his shoulder. He starts to pull away, sure that the hug was too far, but Tommy grabs him by the shirt and refuses to let him leave.

“Oh Toms,” he murmurs.

“I should have fucking run,” Tommy confesses into the cloth, “I can’t--you can’t be real. This can’t be real. You’re faking. I should have run.”

“It’s real,” Wilbur whispers, “I’m real, I care about you. So do Techno and Phil. We’re not going to hurt you, we’re not going to keep you if you don’t want to stay. You could go right now if you wanted.”

“Don’t tell me that,” Tommy sobs, “don’t tell me because I’ll fucking do it.”

“You can stay, too,” Wilbur says, “you can always stay. You can always come back.”

Tommy sobs loudly into his shoulder, his body wracked with tremors. He sounds like his heart is breaking. He sounds like he’s healing, just a little bit.

Wilbur doesn’t know how long they stay like that, leaned over the center console so they can reach each other. The gear shift is digging in to his side, every time Tommy moves the plastic bag rattles loudly. It doesn’t matter. They’ll stay as long as they need to.

“Can we go back?” Tommy whispers eventually.

“Always,” Wilbur says, and slowly he pulls away. Tommy doesn’t stop him this time. He curls up in the seat, arms around his knees, head resting on the window. Wilbur starts the car, cranking the heat up, and takes them home.

Chapter End Notes

That's it, the end, thank you, as always to everyone for reading! I hope you guys enjoyed and I'll see you tomorrow with more!

Actually I'll see you in a couple minutes with more because there's a formerly final chapter that I'll be putting in the Scrap Bin/Purgatory because I wrote it and then decided that this was a stronger ending.

End Notes

Hope you enjoyed!

If you're inspired to create anything based on my fics, art, writing, interperative dance you have full permission to do it. Inspiring other people to do stuff is my favorite thing.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!